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ETTORE FIERAMOSCA:

OR

THE CHALLENGE OF BARLETTA.

THE STRUGGLES OF AN ITALIAN

AGAINST

FOREIGN INVADERS AND FOREIGN PROTECTORS.

BY MASSIMO D'AZEGLIO.

BOSTON:
PHILLIPS, SAMPSON AND COMPANY.
M DCCC LIX.

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ITALY AND FRANCE

IN THE

SIXTEENTH CENTURY:

OR,

ETTORE FIERAMOSCA AT BARLETTA.

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TO

THOSE TRUE AMERICANS

WHO THINK JUSTLY OF ITALIAN VIRTUE, WHO,

ALIVE TO ITALIAN MISFORTUNES, DO NOT EXPECT

ITALIAN SOCIAL REGENERATION FROM BLOOD, STILETTO, OR

CONSPIRACY, BUT FROM ORDER, LAW, MUTUAL

RESPECT, AND FROM THE REVIVAL OF

ITALIAN WISDOM, AND OF

ITALIAN VALOR.

PREFACE.

Most opportunely at the present time, when a struggle for national independence is going on in Europe, I offer this work to the friends of Italy in America.

Depending on their kind feelings towards Italy, I venture this translation, notwithstanding the many defects which must naturally follow my employing a language with which I was totally unacquainted until I had reached manhood.

I have an opinion of my own about Napoleon III. I think him honest. He means, I believe, to do good to Italy. The fact of his upholding the government of Piedmont gives rise to misgivings in the minds of many. Perhaps there is some reason for this. But *exitus acta probat.*

However, if Italy should succeed in asserting her rights, with the help of France, will she continue

A servir sempre vincitrice o vinta?

The true and hopeful answer to this question depends only on the moderation and sincerity of the Italians themselves.

The lessons of 1821, '31, and '48 ought, by this time, to have supplied a code of practical national principles to *all* parties in the Peninsula.

Will the Italians profit by those lessons?

This is the fear of all sincere well-wishers to Italy.

ETTORE FIERAMOSCA.

CHAPTER I.

On the evening of a charming day of April, A. D. 1503, the bell of the tower of San Domenico, in Barletta, gave the signal for the *Angelus*. Following the custom of the peaceful inhabitants of villages, especially at the south of Italy, the people had assembled towards night on the square near the sea, to exchange friendly words, and in the cool breeze, and under the serene sky, enjoy some rest after the labors of the day. Groups of soldiers, Spanish and Italians, had resorted there with the villagers, for the same purpose; some were strolling about the place, and some were standing; others sitting on, or leaning against the boats which had been drawn up in a line along the beach. Like soldiers of all nations and of every age, their manners were such as to say, "Avaunt! the land is ours!" Indeed the villagers, leaving the best of the place to them, kept aloof, thereby tacitly encouraging the soldiers' arrogance. If the reader, to form in his own mind a picture of the scene before us, represented to himself a gathering of the soldiers of our own times, in their unmeaning uniform, he

would be very far from having a correct idea of it. Gonzalo's army, the infantry especially, albeit they were clad better than any other, and decidedly the best corps in Christendom, had no knowledge whatever, no more than any other troops of the sixteenth century, of that severe modern discipline which has gone so far in making the soldiers look like one another from head to foot. At that time any man who entered the army, either on foot or with horse, was at perfect liberty to dress, arm, or equip himself as he pleased. Hence it was easy to know the nationality of every soldier, so striking were the variety and characteristics of fashions, colors, and bearing, which distinguished every man in that crowd. The Spaniards were in general serious, immovable, with an air of defiance, wrapped (or, as they say, *embozados*) in the national mantle (*capa*), from under which protruded the long and slender Toledo blade; the Italians, garrulous, animated in their gestures, in close jackets, and the pistolese dagger hanging across their backs.

At the first sound of the bell the noise instantly ceased, and all heads were uncovered, because, in those times, even soldiers had faith, and really said their prayers. After a brief interval the hats were replaced, and the hum of voices began again. At first, and from a distance, the crowd appeared to be gay and lively; however, had you mingled with them, you would have easily found that there was a common reason to be uneasy and low-spirited; and the mind as well as the conversation were engrossed by matters of distress. Truly there was cogent reason for it. The famine was beginning to be felt already amongst the troops and the inhabitants of Barletta. The noble Captain waiting for the tardy reinforcements expected from Spain, kept his bands within the

walls of that town, not willing to commit the success of the war to the chances of one day, when his men were so much inferior in number to the French.

The square was skirted on three sides by the poor dwellings of seafaring men, by the tavern, and by the church. The other side was open, looking over the sea, and incumbered, as is usual in such places, with boats, nets, and other implements proper for the trade. On the far-off horizon the tall and dark form of Mount Gargano emerged from the waters, with its crest illumined by the level beams of the setting sun.

In the intervening space a vessel was trying to make headway; she tacked continually over the becalmed waters, endeavoring to catch the slightest wind, which now and then breathed over the gulf, and rippled the waters here and there with long curling waves. The distance from the shore, and the faint evening light did not enable the men in Barletta to recognize her colors.

A Spaniard, standing near the shore with the rest of the soldiers, gazed at the boat, straining his eyes, and twisting a pair of very long mustachios, rather gray than black.

"What are ye looking at, there, like a statue, and not even deigning to answer a question?"

This was the apostrophe of a Neapolitan soldier who felt offended because the Spaniard had not answered him before, but still his comrade did not seem moved, not in the least. At last he gave a groan, which sounded more like the wind from a pair of bellows, than the breathing of a man, and said: —

"*Voto a Dios, que Nuestra Señora de Gaeta*, who sends good wind and grants speedy journey to so many who pray to her on the sea, might as well hurry that ship

on to us, who pray to her from the land, and who have nothing else to put between our teeth, unless it is the butt of an arquebuse! Perhaps there is a cargo of grain and provisions for those excommunicated French, who have caged us up here to die of hunger. . . . *Y mala Pasqua me de Dios, y sea la primera que viniere, si su Gracia el Señor Gonzalo Hernandez,** after he has taken a good dinner and a better supper, cares for us more than for the *cuero de sus zapatos.*" †

"What can Gonzalo do?" the Neapolitan retorted, with great pertness, only for the sake of contradicting; "has he to turn himself into bread to enter thy belly? He will give it when he has it; and, now tell me, who has swallowed up the ship, which an evil luck drove over the shoals of Manfredonia, Gonzalo, or yourselves?"

The Spaniard, slightly changing his countenance, seemed disposed to resent, but just then another stepped in, who, slapping him on the shoulder, shaking his head, and lowering his voice so as to give more weight to his words, said:—

"Remember, Nuño, that when, in order to obtain the pay, that unlucky game was played in Taranto, your pike was only three inches from Gonzalo's breast, . . . and if ever your neck was near to be wedded to the rope, it was then. . . . Do you remember the yell we raised? it might have frightened a lion. Is yon tower moving now?" and he pointed to the great spire towering above all the house-tops; "just as much was Gonzalo moved, and so very cool. . . . I see him even now. . . . . He warded the blow off with that hairy hand

* And may God send me a bad Easter, and let it be the next one, if his Grace, my lord Gonzalo Hernandez.

† Sole of his shoes.

of his, and said, '*Mira que sin querer no me hieras.*'" * The dark face of the old soldier became even a shade darker, and to stop a conversation which did not please him much, cut off short, saying:—

"What do I care for Taranto, the pike, or Gonzalo?"

"What do *you* care?" rejoined the first speaker with a smile, "if you mind Ruy Perez and wish to keep the way clear for bread, when *Dios fuere servido* to send us some, better not to talk so loud, lest Gonzalo should hear, and think of Taranto. . . . A half word is scarcely anything, as we Italians say, but a whole one is often too much; and man forewarned is forearmed."

Nuño answered with a grumbling, as if he did not mind what he was saying; the warning, however, made him think in spite of himself; he looked around with an eye of distrust, as if he wanted to be assured that it entered no one's head to report his words. Fortunately he saw no cause of fear.

Meanwhile the square was almost deserted; the clock struck the hour of one; † and our friends, like the rest, parted company and disappeared through the narrow and dark streets of the town.

Ruy Perez remarked, as he went along: "Diego Garcia will arrive this evening, the good lances of his squad must have met with good hunting in the country, and, may be, we will have a dinner to-morrow, much better than the supper of to-night."

The thoughts awakened by this hopeful suggestion put an end to all talk, and they moved silently towards their quarters.

While this conversation was carried on, the vessel,

* Take care, lest thou should'st unintentionally wound me.

† One hour after sundown.

which at first appeared to steer on her course, had slowly approached the land. A small boat was lowered, two men jumped in it, and rowed very swiftly towards the beach; as soon as they had got off, the vessel set all sails, headed for the sea, and was seen no more. The little boat came up at the remotest part of the strand, and the travellers landed. The first of them, perceiving no person around, halted to wait for his companion who tarried to pick up a valise and a few other articles, and pulled the boat up at the extremity of a small pier which was used for the purpose of a landing from large vessels. Having fastened the boat, he rejoined his companion, who, from his appearance and an air of haughty superiority, seemed to be of a different condition, and who, as if in conclusion of a conversation held during the passage, said to him: "Then, Miguel, it is time to be on the *qui vive;* thou knowest who I am, I'll say no more!"

Miguel understood very well the meaning of those few syllables; he bowed in assent, and they walked towards the tavern.

In front of the tavern there was a kind of verandah, supported by six slender pillars, built of rough bricks, and under it a row of tables for the accommodation of customers. Mine host's name was Baccio da Rieti, but he was nicknamed Venom, from certain suspicions entertained by the people in his regard. This man had caused a huge picture of the Sun to be painted in glaring red between the windows; the painter, in accordance with certain notions of astronomy not yet obsolete, had given to it eyes, nose, and mouth, with rays of gold encircling the whole figure, and ending in the shape of swallow-tails, which made it visible at a mile's distance in day-

time. The house was a two-story building. A large room below was used for the purpose of both kitchen and dining-hall. Wooden steps led to the rooms above, where the host lived with his family, and where he lodged any traveller whom an evil star might have led to spend there a wretched night. It was then the general custom throughout Italy to sup at the twenty-third hour;* hence only a few soldiers or some inferior officers were at that hour sitting at the door enjoying the cool breeze. They belonged to the troops of Signor Prospero Colonna, who then followed the arms of Spain, and were all stout-hearted young men, who were in the habit of resorting hither with the other brave men of the army. The host, who knew his business to perfection, kept wine and cards always ready at their call; and as he was a jovial man, and full of fun, he had a pleasant word for every one,—and by this way he squeezed money out of all hands. At that very moment, Venom was standing on the door, fanning himself with his cap, and his apron tucked up on one side; words, jests, and loud laughing showed the good humor of the company, who were in an uproar of merriment.

The two strangers were approaching, and to avoid being noticed, they walked on leisurely, occasionally stopping and conversing between themselves. As they reached the door, and their persons were illumined by the glare from the fireplace, they did not appear different in their dress from the others present. The company scarcely paid any attention to them; but one of them who sat at a distance, and, being in the dark, could better discern the new-comers, could not help exclaiming,

* Until within a few years it was the custom in Italy to reckon the day from sundown to sundown.

"*oh!*" with an expression of great wonder, and in the act of half rising, he added—"*the Duke!*...." The tone in which these words was uttered showed that there was a name to follow; but a quick look from the man who was entering had worked like a spell, and rammed the word back in the soldier's throat. Nobody noticed his embarrassment, only one of his comrades sitting by him, remarked:—

"Boscherino!—what are you dreaming about? A duke? I did not see you drinking much to-day! Is this the place for a duke?"

Boscherino felt relieved at not being believed, and at being taken even for a fool or a drunkard; he said no more, turned to another subject, and went on as merrily as before.

Venom propelled his obese and greasy person towards the strangers, who had just entered the tavern. His countenance was of olive color, furnished with a beard; and a malicious mien, in which the nature of both the hypocrite and the assassin were transparent. With great self-possession he touched his cap, or feigned to, and said:—

"At your command, gentlemen."

He who went by the name of Miguel, came forward and replied: "Something for supper."

Mine host put on a sorry face, and with an air of disappointment, which he endeavored to make appear sincere, answered: "Supper?—you mean to get a bite of some sort, if even that can be got.... God knows, little has been left here since the siege began! A loaf of bread which formerly was bought for a *cortonese*, now costs half florin,—just what I pay at the bakery.... But any how, for such gentlemen

like you, something must be put together. . . . I will do my best. . . ."

After this preamble, — which was made, as taverners are wont to make, for the purpose of charging ten for what cost only two, — he opened a pantry and took out a pan, which he placed on the grate; then with his apron he began to fan the fire, raising the cinders to the very ceiling, and thus soon warmed some ribs of a lamb, which he protested was the only food to be obtained in Barletta at that hour, and even that had been reserved for a corporal who was every moment expected to supper. — " But gentlemen of your quality cannot be sent to bed without supper."

However, the food proved very acceptable, and was served in earthen-ware painted with flowers. A huge-bellied pitcher of water, of the same material, and the half of a goat's-milk cheese, as hard as a stone, in which still appeared the marks of the knives of those who had proved their strength against it, completed the repast. The guests occupied two seats at the bottom of the hall, if that cavern blackened with soot could be thus called. At the opposite end was a huge fireplace, so wide that it might afford room to a dozen persons under its shelter. Three or four grates were built on each side of the chimney. In front of it stood the cook's table, and from the middle of it, a narrow board, completing the form of a T, ran the whole length, almost to the bottom of the hall, where the two travellers had seated themselves. Four burners from a brass lamp that hung from the main rafter, gave just light enough to save the people from bruising their shins against the benches and stools which surrounded the table.

Mine host, after preparing everything for his new cus-

tomers, returned to the door, whistling as it was his wont. At that moment a man galloped up to the tavern, sprang to the ground without touching stirrup, and cried, —

"Hurrah, my boys, cheer up, — good news! and thou, Veleno, multiply thyself in twenty pieces, there shall be work for all. Diego Garcia has returned, and has put up at his quarters; he will be here shortly; they are twenty or twenty-five good swords, himself being as good as four; so try to be ready, and hurry . . . what art thou about? Art thou dead? Away with thee! . . ."

The host stared at the new-comer with wide-open eyes. The messenger was pressed and punched on every side by those brave fellows, anxious to know how the ride had turned out.

"You will kill me, and you will know nothing," he said, pushing them aside, and getting away from them. "Is it you or I who is to speak?"

They all cried out: "Let us have it; the news?"

"The news is that we are fatigued to death, and we have just returned, after having been on horseback fourteen hours without a drop of water. . . . . Hallo! Veleno, bring me a pint, fresh . . . . my throat is like tinder. . . . . But forty heads of large cattle, and sixty dozens of small ones are in Barletta by this time; and three men-at-arms made prisoners. If it please God, they will have to pay many gold ducats for their ransom, as sure as we are baptized Christians, if they wish to see the doors of their homes again. . . . . I assure you, we had enough work to unsaddle them and take their swords. . . . . And will you bring the wine before I drop dead? — Their movements were as quick as lightning. One of them, especially, was brought to the ground, and the wounded horse had him

under, and we all cried to him, 'surrender or you'll die!' — no use, he kept on giving thrusts in tierce with a long sword of his; and had it not broken on the iron bolster of Inigo's saddle, as he aimed a cut at his horse, either we must have finished him with our lances, or he would have been rescued. But at last he surrendered his stump of a sword to Diego Garcia."

At this, Venom arrived with the wine, and poured it out to the speaker, who said to him: "Bless me, you have come at last!"

"What is that devil's name?" Boscherino inquired.

"I could not tell . . . they say he is a great French baron; his name sounds like La Crotte . . . . La . . . . La Motta. Yes. I remember it now; yes, La Motta; the lump of a beast, had you seen him, to make the earth quake. Anyhow, we came out well; and if it pleases God we will have a good time." And turning his eyes around to the interior of the tavern, he shouted: "What art thou doing? knave and poltroon that thou art! the fire is not yet ready! I'll measure thy shoulders with this lance."

And in fact he was moving to carry out his threat, when he saw a large caldron placed over a handful of oak branches, and he forbore. The flames rose crackling, and the landlord, all in a sweat, with flushed cheeks, thought no more of famine or siege, and knowing from experience that there was no trifling with Paredes or with his companions, bustled about the house giving orders. In very quick time he had found all that was wanted; and skinning a lamb, he put one half of it in the caldron to boil; the other half he spitted and stretched across the andirons to roast. The business was in a fair way.

The man who ordered the supper remarked: "It is well for you, Veleno! Had those fellows arrived, and had you not been ready, you would have felt the weight of Diego Garcia's four fingers. I will go now, and send them here in half a minute's notice."

"Hallo! Ramazzoto, are you not coming back with them?" said one of the corporals.

"How can I? the squad is still mounted. I must quarter them, and keep an eye to the booty, which is still in the castle square; and at night, you know, there are busy hands; and in truth there is no lack of them among these troops. Fieramosca, Miale, Brancaleone, and the rest of us have been detailed to the watch, and it has been charged to us to keep order. The hour for the Spaniards will come some other time. Every one in his turn."

"If it be so," said Boscherino, "we'll go with you, and lend you a hand. Halloo, boys! with a will; this man has run over many more miles than we have, he needs help." And thus they all went to the rendezvous of Ramazzoto's company, talking all the while on what had happened that day. Ramazzoto was leading or rather dragging his mule after him by the bridle, surrounded by his friends, giving an account of his exploits, and answering their questions. Boscherino followed them, paying great attention to what was said, when he felt his cloak pulled from behind, and turning, he saw the shadow of one of the two strangers whom he had left at supper in the tavern.

"Boscherino," said the stranger with a low voice, holding him back, while the rest were going on their way, "the Duke wants to see you; have no fears, he will not harm you in the least. But be cautious, and on the alert, come!"

Boscherino, on hearing this, felt as if he had caught the ague, and whispered so low as to be scarcely audible, "Are you Don Miguel?"

"Yes, it is I; hush, and act like the brave man thou art." Boscherino had been chieftain of squads under Signor Giovanni Pagolo Baglioni and other Italian leaders, and had always behaved with valor; no man could be more ready to brave danger than he was; so much so, that when a company of five hundred men on foot, and one hundred fusileers had been levied, under the command of Signor Prospero, to bring reinforcements to Gonzalo, he had been retained with a large compensation for his valuable services. But no matter how stout his heart was, what between the message he had just received from Don Miguel and the command to retrace his steps, knowing in whose presence he was soon to be, his knees began to tremble; and from choice he would rather breast the swords than to go whither he was summoned. Thinking of what had just passed, he was not wrong in his mind and said to himself:—

"I know too well that he heard me when I said 'the Duke.' . . . The fiend from hell was then on my tongue, . . . and still he was not near enough to hear me, and I do not think I spoke very loud. But where would not that soul of a renegade reach? . . . What the devil is he come here for?"

With these thoughts in his mind they reached the tavern. The family alone were in the kitchen. The Duke had retired to the quarters appointed to him for the night, in the story above the large eating-room. The boards of the floor were badly joined together, and so full of crevices that it was very easy to hear and see what was going on below

The host had in fact some suspicion that this man was not, after all, what he feigned to be; but the town being blockaded only by land, all sorts of people landed from the sea, and however extraordinary in appearance, without attracting especial attention, not much notice was taken of persons even when they did not exactly look like the common run.

Don Miguel and Boscherino mounted the stairs, and reached the Duke's room. The furniture of that apartment consisted in a bed covered with gray serge, a small table, and a few stools. The lamp was well-nigh giving out, when the wind blowing from the open door put it out altogether; while Don Miguel went for another light, Boscherino found himself alone with the Duke. He stood riveted to the spot, drawing up close to the wall, daring not to speak and scarcely to breathe, and wondering why he should feel so cowardly, he who cared for nobody. Still the consciousness of being before that remarkable and terrible man, so near to him, as to hear, almost feel his heavy breathing, in that dark stillness, alone; all this, in spite of himself, made his blood curdle, and he wished himself dead. Don Miguel came back with a lamp, and the Duke appeared sitting on the side of the bed. He appeared like a man who never enjoyed rest of body or soul. Well built and of spare limbs, of a height not above the ordinary size, he exhibited a nervousness and trembling which could not be described. He had on a dark cape with sleeves of broad and overlapping lists. He carried a narrow dagger at the belt, and he had laid his sword on the table near his hat, surmounted by only one black plume. He had gloves on, and rough travelling boots. He turned towards the new-comers with a pale countenance, two sunken cheeks marked with spots

black and blue, reddish mustache and beard, the latter flowing in two divisions upon the breast. But nothing could be imagined with which to compare his looks. His eyes would at times dart like the viper's, then as full of charm as a babe's glance, and again as terrible as the bloody look of a hyena, all in turn, as it best suited his purposes.

He looked at Boscherino, who had shrunk into one half of his size, and still kept the same position, just as if he had been waiting to be condemned to the gallows. The Duke endeavored to assure him with a benign look, but the soldier knew him too well, and felt none the less afraid.

"You have recognized me, Boscherino," said he; "and I am glad of it. I have always looked upon you as a trusty and honest fellow. Had you not come in my way, I would have looked after you. Well, I knew you were here. Tell nobody you have seen me. You know I can repay you for your services; and it would do you no good to offend me."

The *Caposquadra* felt the truth of these words too well, and replied, —

"*Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima* can dispose of me at your pleasure, and I will be as faithful a servant as I ever was. Only allow me to say one word with frankness."

The Duke nodded assent, and the other continued: —

"Noble lord, I have pledged you my faith, and it will never fail you. But perhaps you have been seen. If, after I leave you, should it become known that you are here, a charge might be laid on me, which I deserve not. Thus, I do not see how I can come out of this with honor."

"Go," the Duke answered, "be in good spirits, try to be a brave man, and I will not lay on thee any blame thou deservest not. A few hours only of incognito will suit my purpose; afterwards I care not what people may know or say; but let it never escape from thy lips, if thou valuest my favor."

Boscherino made no reply, he only bowed most respectfully; but looked like one who, ready to comply, feels an apprehension, withal, that there is not much trust placed in his protestations. He took leave, and continuing his bows as he walked backward, he left the room, longing to be in the street again. After a few moments Don Miguel came out also, and went to the room prepared for him, and locked himself in. That part of the tavern remained for the night as still as if it were untenanted.

CHAPTER II.

The company for whom supper had been prepared, entered Venom's tavern pretty near two o'clock, and the large room was filled by them immediately. Mine host wished to do himself honor, and hence he had spread a clean white cloth on the tables; the plate, the spoons, and the forks, some of pewter and some of brass, having been carefully polished, were shining more than usual; and to make the table even more attractive, he had placed, here and there, leaves of grape-vines to serve as mats for pitchers and tumblers, and the glare of many lights sparkled on the drops of water hanging on them, testifying that they had been lately rinsed. Diego Garcia de Paredes entered first, followed by the captive French barons — Jacques de Guignes, Giraut de Forses, and La Motte. The Spaniard was the most daring and the most athletic man of the whole army, and perhaps of all Europe; and he seemed built expressly for the profession of arms, the adaptedness for which depended at that time above all on great robustness and muscular strength. His height was far above that of his comrades; constant exercise and continual hardships had kept his form from growing heavy, and had given such thickness to brawny muscle and sinew, as to make his breast, shoulders, and limbs appear not unlike a colossus of ancient sculpture, — athletic in form, but

well proportioned and handsome. A neck, thick as a bull's, supported a head, small, curly, with hair upright on the crown; his countenance was manly, full of confidence, but not haughty; there was even a touch of amiability; and his soul, candid, loyal, and full of honor, was transparent from it. He had already doffed his armor, and appeared in his dress of tight leathern breeches, so that whenever he moved the muscles might be seen rising and darting as if under the bare skin; a short cloak, after the Spanish fashion, thrown over one shoulder, completed a dress elegant in its simplicity.

"My lords barons," he said, leading the prisoners into the room with a knightly courtesy, "we Spaniards say: '*Duelos con pan son menos.*'* The odds have been against you to-day; to-morrow they will be against us; but here we join hands; let us eat, because, I think, we are all on the same side, in this point, *por Dios santo;* we have broken more than one lance, and that is work enough for one day; they cannot say that we let our arms get rusty. Be of good cheer; on the morrow, we will talk about the ransom, and you will be satisfied that Don Garcia knows how to deal with chevaliers of your stamp."

La Motte showed the countenance of one who is sorely vexed and still does not wish to manifest his vexation. He was a brave man, a good soldier, and terrible with arms in hand, and his appearance did not belie his high spirits; but being as haughty a man as one can ever hope to meet, he could not bear to receive any kindness at the hands of him who had made him prisoner. However, knowing too well how mean it would be to show ill-humor, he replied as pleasantly as he could:—

* Food makes trials more bearable.

"If your hand bears down so light in fixing a ransom as it did when it gave a cut of the sabre, the *Cristianissimo* will have to pay out of his own purse, or I will have to keep you company for the rest of my life."

"Inigo," said Paredes to a handsome youth, twenty-five years old, who, while waiting for his supper, had commenced nibbling at the bread, "if there be a question about blows, we must ask your horse how he felt the cuts of this baron."

Then turning towards La Motte, he continued:—

"Too late I notice that you have no sword; here is mine,"—and unbuckling the belt, he girded it around the captive's side;—"it would be too bad if that hand of yours could not find a hilt to rest upon. Barletta will be your prison, until an exchange is effected or a ransom paid. Your word, knight!"

La Motte offered his right hand to Paredes, who pressed it. "The same bargain for your companions. Is it not so?" he added, turning towards Correa and Azevedo, two men-of-arms, who had captured La Motte's companions. They agreed at once, and with equal courtesy took their swords from their sides and fastened them on the French prisoners.

"Supper's ready," shouted Venom, as he was in the act of laying in the centre of the table a dish which contained one half of the lamb, swimming in a gravy of onions and vegetables, and a large plate containing a pile of lettuce on both sides. The sight of the dish had no less power than the voice of the host to bring together the famished company. With a rush, all of one accord, removing and replacing the settles, were at once seated, and at work; and for a few minutes no words were

heard, but instead, the clatter of plates, tumblers, forks, and knives.

Apart from the rest, at the head of the table, sat Diego Garcia, who had La Motte and De Guignes at his sides. He carved with a large dagger, and with the rapidity of the lightning he had cut the lamb into pieces, and divided it among the guests. His iron stomach, at whose command he had two rows of the whitest teeth, so powerful as not to fear any comparison, was very soon appeased, if not satisfied. He left no bones on his plate, because no mastiff could compete with him in crushing and reducing them to dust. When the dish was empty, he filled his goblet and those of his neighbors. They began to be warmed by the wine; and questions, repartees, remarks, and jests went around the room, about the chances of the war, their horses, the blows they had given and received, and the different adventures of the day. At the lower extension of the table sat the twenty or more Spaniards, who, out of courtesy, had left the *cabecera*, as they call it, — that is to say, the upper table, — to their chief and the French captives. An attentive observer could easily perceive in their manners and words that affectionate brotherhood which binds together men every day exposed to the same dangers, when every one feels the importance of a compact being formed to help each other as the occasion may require. It was a picture worthy of Gherardo delle Notti; the rough and swarthy faces of those warriors, which the exercise, the late fatigue, and the heat of the summer had made red and fiery, as the light of the lamps reflected upon them, created an effect of *chiaro-scuro* befitting that painter's pencil.

As the supper was drawing to an end, the conversation, as usual, became more general; and those men who

had gained honor and profit by the exploits of the day, had become merry and noisy. Only Inigo's brow appeared gloomy. He had his elbow on the table, his look was vacant, and he seemed to take little or no interest in what his companions said around him.

"Inigo!" said Azevedo, holding his hand out to him;—he had emptied, perhaps, one glass more than usual, and being naturally a jolly companion, he could not bear to see one of the company with a moody face;—"Inigo, we shall have to think you are in love, if the women of Barletta were worthy the regards of a handsome fellow like you. But here, please God, we have nothing to fear. Perhaps you have left your heart behind in Spain or in Naples?"

"I have no thought of women, Azevedo," answered the youth; "but I think of the fine horse which yon French baron has almost killed when he kept plying with his hands like a madman, and when he ought to have been satisfied that he could not escape. Poor Castagno! his shoulder is gone, I fear, and I will never bestride the like of him. Don't you remember what that devil did in Taranto? and when we waded that river .... how do you call it? .... There, where Quignonès was killed .... and the water was deeper than we thought; who reached the shore first? and after so much bravery and so many dangers he was to die at the hands of that enemy of God!"

"Easy, don't speak so loud," said Correa; "it was done in good warfare, and we must not aggravate the prisoner's situation; it would be wrong to let them hear us."

"And I swear," rejoined Inigo, "I had better be down with a good wound myself, if I could see my poor Castagno well; and I would fain have pardoned the French-

man had he broken his sword on my head, instead of giving vent to his fury against the horse. The man is to be aimed at; at least it is done so by those who know how to handle a sword; not here and there and everywhere, like a maniac. Beshrew him! he acted as if he were chasing away flies."

"I say then, thou art right, *por Dios*," exclaimed Segredo, an old soldier, with such a beard and moustache as could only belong to a man who had weathered the storms of many a battle. "When I was young I felt just as thou dost; look at this brow,"—and he lightly struck it with his right hand, made callous by wearing the iron gauntlet, and pointed to a scar which cut his eyelid horizontally,—"this I got from el Rey Chico, and all for the sake of a horse, the best bay that was ever ridden into a camp. That was a horse, I assure you! When we had to fight at arm's length, it was enough to give him a twitch with the bridle, and make a show at the spur. I wish you had seen him then! He would rear, and arch, and bound forward, so that if I did not wish to fly over his ears, I had to keep my knees tight, I assure you; as he came down on his forefeet again, down came my sword with him, and it looked like God's lightning, and by that way I have sent many a Moor to take supper with Satan. But at the *siesta!* I would lie down in the shade between his legs; poor *Zamoreno de my alma*, he would not even chase the flies, lest he might disturb me. Then, at the siege of Carthagena, where few among you could have been, and where the great Captain began to make himself known, . . . and Segredo tells you, it was then the time to make war, a little better than now, under the very eye of King Ferdinando, and of Queen Isabella, who was a beauty, and

of all his court, well paid, and both men and horses kept as if they belonged to the prince's household, . . . well, to tell you about my horse, in a sally where el Rey Chico fought at the head of his men like a lion, — and he was a man who only came up to my breast, but had an arm that left the mark wherever he touched, — that poor beast had his neck pierced through and through by a Moorish lance, and for the first time in his life he fell on his knees. I leaped to the ground, and saw at once that there was no remedy. Still I hoped to lead him back out of the camp, as I could not bear to abandon him; he followed me, though he could scarcely keep on his feet. I am not ashamed to repeat here that very warm tears ran down my cheeks through the gorget of my helmet, and wetted my neck; and I had never before known what it was to cry! At that moment a party of Moors wheeled around, pressed by a band of soldiers, and the king had to fly, and ran yelling like a bull. Alone, and on foot, I gave myself up as lost. I kept many of them at bay with my good sword; but that of the king fell on my head, cleft the helmet, and I was left on the field as dead. When I recovered, and could rise, I found poor Zamoreno dead at my side."

Every one around the table heard with much feeling the adventures of Segredo's horse; and when the old soldier had told of Zamoreno's death, he could not help showing in his face, wrinkled by age and exposure, that his old companion was still fresh in his memory. But he became ashamed at this show of weakness, and filled the glass to divert the eyes which were still rivveted on him. Jacques de Guignes, who, as well as the other prisoners, felt in much better spirits as the stomach was filling up, having heard the history of Zamoreno, began: —

"*Chez nous*, sir knight, this would not have happened so very easily, although it is too true that *les bonnes coutumes de chevalerie* are falling away very fast. Still a man-at-arms would feel dishonored if, in an equal contest of arms and number, his sword should fall on a horse. But everybody knows that we cannot expect so much courtesy from the Moors."

"And still," said Inigo, replying to a remark not addressed to him, "we can easily prove that killing horses is not an exclusive tactic of Moors. We remember too well the plains of Benevento and Manfredi could tell a sad tale. And who ordered the charge but Charles d'Anjou, who was no more of a Moor than either of us?"

The thrust was well aimed, and the Frenchman seemed to feel ill at ease on his chair.

"*On dit*, perhaps it is true; but Charles d'Anjou was fighting for a kingdom, and he had to do with an excommunicated enemy of the Church."

"And was he not an enemy to other people's property?" replied Inigo, with a bitter smile.

"I believe you know," here chimed in La Motte, "that the kingdom of Naples is a fief of the Holy See, and Charles had been invested with it; and then the strength of a good sword is to be taken in account of some claim."

"And then, and then . . . let us tell the whole history," Inigo rejoined; "the German morions of Manfredi, and the thousand Italian chevaliers who were led by Conte Giordani against the French, had given such accounts of themselves from the outset of the battle, that Charles d'Anjou, wishing to become King of Naples, did not judge it amiss to have recourse to such manœuvres, notwith-

standing *les bonnes coutumes de chevalerie* so rigorously followed in those times."

"If you wish it, I will allow," answered La Motte, "that the German cuirassiers are an available soldiery, and perhaps they held out against the French *gensdarmerie* for a while, on the day at Benevento; but as for your thousand Italians, oh, indeed! if two hundred years ago they were what they are now, it was not necessary for the French to waste their time in crippling their poor horses. During these last five years that I have been battling in Italy, I have had a good chance to know them. I have followed King Charles under the brave Louis d'Ars; and I assure you their bad faith has given us more work than their swords. They pursue a kind of warfare in which French chivalry is entirely unpractised."

These bombastic words did not please the hearers, and were most offensive to Inigo, who had been well brought up, with good training, and had talent above the common average; he was on friendly terms with many Italians who were in the pay of Spain, and knew well enough how affairs had been conducted at the descent of Charles into Italy. He knew, for instance, that notwithstanding this French chivalry, faith had not been kept to the Florentines, and the Pisans had been excited to rebellion against them; and he knew that the forts which had been placed in their hands by the imprudence of Pietro de' Medici, had not been restored to them according to promise. Inigo thought of all this, and La Motte's words stung him to the quick, as he could not bear that the poor Italians, betrayed and abused by the French, should at the same time be branded by them as traitors, and overwhelmed with abuse. He was therefore about to give him a piece of his mind; but the Frenchman, aware that

his words had created bad feelings, added: "You have arrived from Spain only a little while ago, gentlemen, and you do not know what a race of *canaille* the Italians are. You have had nothing to do with Duke Lodovico, or with the Pope, or with the Valentino, who first received us with open arms, and then tried to plunge a poniard into our backs. But at Fornovo they were made to feel that a handful of *men* can outdo a host of *traitors;* and the Moro himself was the first caught in his own web. The villain! if he had nothing else to answer for but the death of his nephew, would not this be enough to uphold him as the most infamous of all assassins?"

"But," Correa said, "his nephew was sickly and half-witted, and the common report is he died a natural death."

"Yes, as naturally as those who die of poison. You may ask De Forses and De Guignes, who also quartered with me at the castle of Pavia. I will tell you what I have heard from the lips of Philippe de Comines, who had it from the King himself. The King then went to pay a visit to the unfortunate family of Galeazzo. The Moro led him through dark corridors, into rooms low and damp, looking over the trenches of the castle; there he found the Duke of Milan, with his wife Isabella and his children. She threw herself at his knees, entreating him in behalf of her father; she did not dare to speak for herself and her husband, because that traitor Moro was present. The unfortunate Galeazzo lay pale and exhausted; he spoke very little, and seemed to be overcome, bewildered by the immensity of his misfortune. The poison, which killed him at last, was already working in his veins. . . . And then take Cesare Borgia for another instance! where can you find a pair, the like of them?

We know he has done things, which, if related, would not be believed. Still many of his exploits are already well known. Everybody knows he murdered his brother to get possession of his honors and wealth; everybody knows how he became the master and lord of Romagna; everybody knows that he has murdered his brother-in-law, poisoned cardinals, bishops, and many more who were in his way."

Then turning to his French comrades with the countenance of one who calls to mind a well-known fact, and worthy of commiseration: "And the unfortunate Ginevra of Montreale? The handsomest, the purest, the most lovely of all women I have ever seen! These friends of mine remember her; we saw her on our passage through Rome in 1492. But an evil destiny made her become acquainted with Duke Valentino; she had been wedded to one of our soldiers, whom she married more through obedience to her father than from love. She was seized with a disease, the nature of which no one could understand; they applied every kind of remedy; it was of no use; she died. However, a very remarkable accident made me acquainted with a hellish plot which few have known. Her sickness was the effect of poison, administered to her by Valentino, to punish her for her honesty. Unfortunate girl! Are not these crimes enough to draw vengeance from Heaven?"

Here the Frenchman paused, as if to remember some circumstance which the lapse of time had dimmed in his memory.

"O! yes; I am right; this very day, as we were coming to Barletta, I saw among your men one whose name I cannot in fact recollect, but whom I remember to have often met in Rome in those times. He is of a height

and of a countenance not so very easily forgotten; he was believed by every one to be the paramour of Ginevra; and after her death he disappeared, and no more was heard of him. (*Mais, oui, je suis sûr que c'est le même,*" he added, turning to his companions.) "When about a mile from the town, halting at the fountain to wait for the men on foot, I saw that pale youth with auburn hair, and I never saw a handsomer youth, and a more pensive brow. . . . Yes, yes, it is he certainly; but do not ask me the name."

The Spaniards looked at each other, endeavoring to guess at whom he meant.

One asked, "Was he an Italian?"

"Yes, Italian. True, I did not hear him speak; but a companion who had dismounted and reached him a drink, spoke to him in Italian."

"And his arms?"

"It seems to me he had on a plain cuirass, with a coat of mail; and, if I am not mistaken, feathers and scarf azure."

Inigo at once cried, "Ettore Fieramosca!"

"That's it—Fieramosca," answered La Motte; "I remember now—Fieramosca. Well, this Fieramosca was in love with Ginevra, as it was commonly reported; and many thought he had destroyed himself, as he was seen no more after her death."

At this the Spaniards smiled, and remarked it was no wonder that he was always melancholy, and he kept so much to himself, and led a life so different from his comrades. But all praised his good nature, his valor and his courteousness; which was a good proof of how much he was beloved and esteemed by the whole army. Above the rest, Inigo was a particular friend of his; and with a

noble soul, admiring without jealousy the noble qualities of the Italian warrior, the more he knew him to be his superior, the more he loved him, and spoke for him with all that warmth of friendship of which a Spaniard's heart is capable.

"You like his countenance! and who should not? but what is beauty to a man? If you knew the soul of that youth! the nobility, the greatness of that heart! if you knew what he has done, sword in hand, with that daring valor which in many is allied to a kind of madness, but in him is on the contrary ever united to a cool judgment! . . . In my lifetime I have known many a brave youth both at the court of Spain and in France; but I say to you, on my honor, that I have never met, nor do I expect ever to meet, in one person, so many virtues as are harbored in the breast of that Italian, who, *por Dios*, possesses them all."

Fieramosca, being a great favorite with the army, all wanted to put in a word, and express their sentiments in his behalf; even old Segredo appeared as tender as the rest on that subject, and said: —

"It is true I never had much time to throw away with women; and I could never understand how a baron, sheathed in a coat of mail, could ever worry after them; still, when I see that brave young man, always with low spirits and sorrowful countenance, he gives rise in my breast to such feelings as I cannot understand, and, *por Dios santo*, I would truly give my best horse, (Pardo excepted,) to see him once enjoying a hearty laugh."

"I always said that it was the effect of love," Azevedo remarked. "When you see a young man with a pale face, very little to say, and fond of solitude, you may be sure some woman has a hand in it. It is true, however,"

—and here he smiled,—"that sometimes a couple of games at the *zecchinetta*, if the odds are against you, will give a bitter taste to your mouth, and will make you as pale and downcast as ten petticoats will; . . . but, no matter; it is a different affair altogether, and does not last so long. As to Fieramosca, there is no danger of that sort; I never saw him handling cards. Now I understand the reason of his nocturnal rambles. You know that my windows open over the Molo. I have seen him more than once to take a boat alone late in the night and row around the castle. 'A pleasant journey to thee,' I would say as I was going to bed; every one to his own taste; and I thought that he was in quest of some love adventure; but I could never imagine that he went to sea to weep over the departed. I can scarcely believe it; a soldier like him to take after such nonsense!"

"This proves," replied Inigo, "that a heart good and affectionate can beat in a brave soldier's breast, and *viva Dios!* that on this point we must be just to Fieramosca, and all the Italians who are under pay of the Colonnas; no one, who carries a sword at his belt and a lance in his hand, can boast of wielding them better, or of being in the least more brave than any of them."

To this eulogy, which was rendered with the warmth of a generous and truthful heart, the Spaniards responded with words and signs of approbation, protesting that they had opportunities to witness the bravery of the Italian men-at-arms every day. But the three prisoners, who began to feel heated with the conversation and with wine, did not seem to agree with the rest. La Motte, moreover, had a private grudge against Inigo, who had made him the butt of his unsparing taunts during the whole evening; and he held every one inferior to himself, so incar-

nate was his self-esteem and vanity! Hence he returned only a look of pity and a forced smile to the assertions of the Spaniard, whose face became flushed with rage, and could scarcely control himself, when La Motte continued thus: —

"As to that, sir knight, neither I nor my companions are of your opinion. We have been in the wars of Italy for many years; and, as I have told you, we have seen more use made of poison and stilettoes than of swords or lances, believe me. A French *gens d'armes*," and he put on an air of great importance, "would be ashamed to hire men for the work of his stable who were not better than these Italians; then imagine whether they can stand any comparison with us."

"Hear, sir knight, and open your ears well," answered Inigo, who could no longer contain himself, while listening to this man heaping insults on the heads of his friends, and, moreover, seized with pleasure the opportunity of venting his anger against him who had crippled his horse, — "had we here some of our Italians, and Fieramosca above all, and were you not a prisoner of Diego Garcia, but a free man, you might learn, before retiring to your repose, that a man-at-arms from France would have to use both hands to save his skin from an Italian; but as you are a prisoner, and here are only Spaniards, I, as a friend of Fieramosca, and of the Italians, protest, in their behalf, that you, or whoever says that they are afraid, with arms in hand, to meet any one, and that they are, as you have said, cowards and poltroons, utters a villanous lie; and I affirm that they will meet any challenge, on foot or horseback, with all arms, or with the sword alone, wherever, whenever, it may please the challenger."

La Motte and his companions, as Inigo began to speak, had given him an arrogant look; but as he proceeded, they gradually betrayed astonishment and anger, and waited for the conclusion. If, in the midst of a mirthful and noisy company words of blood and death are uttered, all become silent, and are held in suspense to know how the affair will end. So the clamor being stilled, the Spaniards were anxiously waiting for the result of this quarrel.

"We are prisoners," rejoined La Motte with a modesty full of disdain; "and we might not well accept a challenge; but, with the sanction of these men-at-arms who have received our swords, and with a clear understanding that they will receive a just ransom, now in my own name, and in that of my companions, and of the whole French army, I do make this reply to you, and I repeat what I have said long ago, and what I will ever proclaim, everywhere, that the Italians are only fit to plot treason, are worthless on the battle-field, and that they are the meanest race that ever mounted a horse or put on a cuirass. Whoever says I lie, lies himself, and I will prove my assertion, sword in hand."

Then he took from his bosom a golden cross, kissed it, and placed it on the table. "And may I have no hope in this sign of our salvation, when my last hour shall come, may I be proclaimed as a false knight, held unworthy to wear golden spurs, if I and my companions do not answer the challenge which the Italians through you have sent to me; and with the help of God, of Our Lady, and of St. Denis, who will certainly stand by us, we shall show to the whole world how much difference there is between the French soldiers and this rabble whom you have undertaken to patronize."

"And be it so, in God's name," was Inigo's response. Then he also unbuttoned his jupon, and took from his neck a medal of Our Lady of Monserrato, with which he crossed himself, and placed it by La Motte's golden cross. It is true he betrayed some mortification, because his poverty did not allow him to show a battle-pledge equal in value to that of La Motte, but overcoming that feeling, he said boldly: —

"There is my pledge — Diego Garcia will take charge of them in the name of Gonzalo, who will not refuse free ground to our noble friends, or to the French knights who will appear in the contest."

"Not he!" said Garcia, taking up the pledges. "Gonzalo will never hinder this brave people from trying their swords and to prove themselves true knights. But you, sir baron," — turning to La Motte, — "you will have between your teeth a bone to pick much harder than you imagine."

"*C'est notre affaire,*" answered the Frenchman, with a toss of the head and a smile; "neither I nor my companions will ever think that, to unhorse four Italians, for the purpose of convincing this brave Spaniard of his mistake, has been the most dangerous or noblest achievement of our lives."

Diego Garcia never felt in good spirits, and in his element, but when he was either in the heat of a fight, or there was a question of fighting. It is no wonder then, that when he saw arrangements made for a challenge, which would be fought and contested with all the fury that national honor can inspire, he could scarcely keep in his skin; and raising his head and voice, and clapping two hands which would have befitted Sampson's arms, exclaimed: —

"Knight, your sentiments are such as only men of honor and soldiers of your temper can speak, and I have no doubt that deeds will not belie your words. Long may the brave of all nations live!" And saying so, he filled his cup; and as the noble soldier's pledge went around, they all quaffed their goblets to the honor of the conquerors to be. As the excitement subsided a little, Inigo added: —

"The insult you have offered to the Italian name, sir knight, is such as will not be easily forgotten by my friends, or that will end with the breaking of a lance, as it were only the issue of a joust. I make no arrangements now as to the number of combatants; this will be fixed upon by the two parties; but whatever that may be, I offer to you and to your companions battle with all arms, and to the last blood, until every man be dead, or made prisoner, or placed *hors de combat.* Do you accept the terms?"

"I do."

The conditions being accepted, and there being nothing else to be done for the present in the matter, and it being very late, they all felt the want of rest after the labor of the day. They rose with one accord, and leaving the tavern, disbanded and moved towards their quarters. The French barons were taken under charge with due honor, and lodged by those who had made them prisoners. But we feel warranted in asserting that, notwithstanding the bravadoes with which they had affected to express such low opinion of the Italians, a certain inward feeling, and the experience they severally had in Italian wars, made them feel that deeds more than words would be required to make them come out of the meeting with honor. And Inigo, however confident he felt in the valor

of his friends, and however assured that, for the name of the Italian arms, they would stand against the whole world, still, taking into consideration that the other party were warriors of well-proven skill, and the most tried swords of the French army, he could not help feeling great anxiety as to the end which that important affair might come to. In fact, La Motte and his companions were just the men to give a challenger the meeting he desired. Their prowess was known to every man of arms of those times; and in the French ranks were many a man not inferior to them in courage and training; and the famous Bayard, to mention no other, added great weight to their side of the scales.

In spite of all these thoughts, the high-minded Spaniard never regretted to have taken side with the Italians; and he felt that he would have never pardoned himself had he allowed that impertinent captive to insult so wantonly those who did not deserve the insult; were they not Inigo's friends, and absent forsooth? and, as he said to himself, how can the man who fights for his country be conquered? Thus reassured in his heart, he determined to confer with Fieramosca in the morning, and to take every measure in his power to arrange matters for the honor of the party he had taken under his protection. Full of these honorable thoughts, he waited, without much sleep, for the hour he could set out to work.

CHAPTER III.

The fortress of Barletta, in which Gonzalo and several superior officers of the army had their quarters, was situated between the main piazza of the town and the sea. The officers, both Spanish and Italian, with their attendants and squires, were lodged in the houses of private citizens in the immediate neighborhood of the fortress. One of the best mansions had been appropriated for the brothers Prospero and Fabrizio Colonna and their splendid train of squires, servants, and horses, as it was befitting their noble family. Ettore Fieramosca had become endeared to them for his many beautiful traits of character, and they held him in the place of a son, and had assigned to him a small dwelling near the sea-shore, where he was comfortably lodged with his attendants, horse, and baggage. A room in the upper story, which looked to the east, was his sleeping apartment.

It was the morning after the supper, at the first peep of day, when a dim gray light scarcely defined the dark boundary of the sea, young Fieramosca had left his bed, on which he did not always enjoy easy slumbers, and had gone to a terrace, the pillars of which were gently laved by the waves moved by the light morning breeze.

Unhappy citizens of the north! You cannot appreciate the value of this hour under a beautiful southern sky, on the sea-shore, when nature is yet buried in its slumbers,

and the stillness is scarcely broken by the subdued gurgle of the billow, which, like the thought of man, has never rested since its creation, and will not cease to move but when it will cease to exist. Only he who has found himself alone at this hour,—only he who has felt the last beating of the soft wing of a morning bat in the opening of the warm season on the charming coast of the Regno,—he alone well knows how great is the celestial beauty of things created.

A palm-tree grew on the flank of the terrace. Seated on the parapet, his shoulder leaning against the tree, and supporting his knee with crossed hands, our youthful knight enjoyed some moments of rest, and breathed that pure air which is the harbinger of dawn.

Nature had bestowed upon him the precious gift of a soul aspiring after whatever is fair, good, and noble. Only one fault he had, if it may be called a fault—he was too *buono*. But, reared from his tender youth in the profession of arms, he soon acquired knowledge of men and things; with a mind naturally correct, he readily learnt within what limits goodness should be kept, lest it should degenerate into weakness; and that sternness which is oftentimes the result of a life exposed to continual dangers, had become, in a heart like his, a just firmness,—the noble and precious virtue that always dwells in a manly breast.

Fieramosca's father, a gentleman of Capua, of the school of Braccio da Montone, had become old in the wars which lacerated Italy in the fifteenth century, and on his death bequeathed to his son only the legacy of a sword; and Ettore thought that the profession of arms was the only one worthy of himself, and for many years he really had no other aspirations but those of the times

in which he lived, when the strength of arms was employed only to enhance fame and wealth.

But as he grew in age, he also increased in wisdom; he always improved the brief intervals of respite he had from the wars in study and reading, instead of wasting his time in the chase, jousts, and other amusements indulged in by the youth of those times. He became well acquainted with the ancient writers, and with the honored deeds of those who had shed their blood for their country's sake, not for the sake of those who paid best! He then felt that the profession of arms is in itself a nefarious one, if it be undertaken on the principle of the outlaw, who fights only for the purpose of plundering his fellow-man, and not for the noble and virtuous motive of defending himself and his from foreign aggression.

When still a boy, he was obliged to follow his father on an important mission to Naples. At the court of Alfonso, he became acquainted with the famous Pontano, who, being well pleased with the talents and handsome appearance of the youth, became attached to him. He admitted him into the academy, which, although established by the Panormita, still went by the name of Pontania,* and educated him with great care, receiving in

* Antony of Palermo, usually called Panormita, had established in Naples a society of literary men, which began to flourish about the middle of the fifteenth century. Pontano succeeded the Panormita; and the academy has ever since been known by the name of Pontamana. The Panormita died in 1471, and Pontano in 1503, the year in which the challenge of Barletta took place. Before his death he had spurned at the honors offered to him by Louis XII., who was anxious to reconquer the kingdom of Naples, while the Italians held out against him, backed by the troops of Don Gonzalo de Cordova. In the beginning of the sixteenth century the south of Italy was the theatre of a struggle precisely of the same character as the one going on now in Lombardy. The French were *then* the hated intruders,

return for his kindness that affectionate respect which is the offspring of gratitude blended with admiration.

The eloquent appeals of the teacher kindled a fire of love for his country and for Italian glory which could not be smothered in a heart like Ettore's, and grew almost to a degree of frenzy. He challenged a French gentleman, his superior in age and strength, to fight with the sword, because he had spoken of the Italians with disrespect, wounded him, and made him retract his words, before the King and his court. After leaving Naples, and after many vicissitudes, he met with those adventures of love of which we have had some hint from the conversation of the French knight in the preceding chapter.

But when Charles VIII. had created so much disturbance in Italy, and the French troops kept it either in fetters or in continual fear, he felt the love of his country burning more fervidly within his heart, as he witnessed the overbearing conduct of those intruders, who acted as if they were the lords of the country. He was indignant at hearing the report of their insolence in their passage through Lombardy, Tuscany, and other Italian states; and when he heard of the bold answer made by Pier Capponi to the King, and how the latter had yielded, his joy knew no bounds, and he praised the gallant Florentine to the sky.

The royal family of Naples had been driven away. Then Fieramosca thought it better to attach himself to the Spanish cause, in order to check as much as possible the too much increasing power of the other party, and because he deemed Spanish self-conceit less unbearable than the hollow French boasting; moreover, he feared

whom the Italo-Spanish armies endeavored to drive out of the Peninsula. See Prescott's Ferdinand and Isabella, Part II. ch. x. xi. xii.

less an enemy who could not approach Italy but by sea; and, lastly, he thought that if they could succeed in driving the French away by means of the arms of the Spaniards, it would not be so difficult to establish a good government in Italy.

A few straggling stars were fast disappearing at the approach of the eastern light. The sun had already illumined the highest tops of the Gargano, imparting to them a roseate color, which, in the shady recesses of the mountain, changed into purple, whilst the beach, which was shaped in the form of a half-moon, connecting with the Barletta shore, displayed, at the light of the growing day, a beautiful and varied assemblage of valleys and hills which descended to bathe in the sea. The thicket of chestnut-trees, already shining with the golden light of the morning sun on the crest of the mountain, opened in their descent either in grassy lawns of most beautiful green, or in patches of cultivated land. At some point stood prominent the whiteness of a rock, in others, the flank of a high bluff appeared dyed with red or yellow, according to the different quality of the soil. The sky-colored sea underneath seemed motionless, but for the incessant rolling of the tide against the rocks, thus confining them with a belt of the whitest foam.

In the more interior part of the gulf, on a small island connecting with the main land by a long and narrow bridge, in the midst of palms and cypress-trees, was built a monastery with a small church and belfry, all inclosed within a wall, indented with *merlons* and towers for a protection against a first attack of pirates or Saracens.

Ettore seemed to gaze in that direction with an impassioned look; and straining his eyes, while the fog, which at that time covered the low lands, scarcely allowed

him to distinguish the outlines of the building, he attentively listened to the feeble sound of the bell which tolled the morning Ave Maria, and was so much absorbed that he did not hear Inigo, who was calling him from the yard, and who, not receiving any answer, mounted the stairs.

"After a day like yesterday, I did not think you would be up before the sun," said Inigo, advancing to the terrace.

If you have ever been engrossed with a great and fiery thought, you can well understand how far from pleasant it must have been to Fieramosca to be caught in that mood of mind, and to be obliged to give up his meditations. He turned around with a countenance which betrayed his feelings to such an extent that Inigo almost felt that he was unwelcome. But Ettore's soul was too just and affectionate to blame his friend for this involuntary intrusion. Without making a precise reply to the remark of Inigo, he advanced to meet him, shook him by the hand, and, having recovered himself entirely, said in perfectly good humor: —

"What good wind has brought thee here at this hour?"

"The best wind; and I expect a guerdon for the news I am going to give thee. This is the reason why I have scarcely waited for daylight, and have hastened hither. I have always envied thy valor; to-day I envy thy good luck. A happy man thou art, mine Ettore! Heaven has set apart for thee a feat of honor, which I am sure thou wouldst have purchased at any price. Well, thou hast it now before thee without expense or trouble. Truly thou art born in good luck!"

Fieramosca led his friend into the house, and having seated him opposite to himself, was impatient to hear about this great fortune. He was in a few words in-

formed of what had taken place the evening before, how he had taken up the Italian side, and of the intended challenge. When he had repeated the insolent words of La Motte, — and we may be sure he knew how to repeat them, — the brave Italian jumped on his feet, striking his clenched fist on the table, and with eyes darting a fierce joy,—

"No, not yet," he cried, "is our misery come to this, that we lack arms or swords to ram back into the throat of this French thief what, in an unlucky hour for him, has escaped from his mouth! And may God bless thy tongue, Inigo, my brother, (and he embraced him affectionately); I shall be eternally thankful to thee for the care thou hast taken of our honor, and, alive or dead, I shall never forget it." There was no end to his expressions of thanks, to the offers of his grateful heart, and to the caresses he bestowed on his friend. As that first impulse had subsided a little,—

"Now," said Fieramosca, "it is time to act, not to talk." He then called a servant; and while the menial assisted him in dressing, he went on mentioning the names of those who might be chosen to answer the challenge, desirous to have a band as large as possible.

"There are many good ones amongst us. But this is an affair of too much importance. Let us name the best. Brancaleone, — yes, he is one. He has such a pair of shoulders at his command that there is no fear that any French lance will bend him an inch. Capoccio and Giovenale;—these three are Romans; and, I assure thee, the Horaces were no better swordsmen. We have three now. Let us see: Fanfulla da Lodi, that madcap, dost thou know him? (Inigo looked upward, knit his brows a little, and pressed his lips, like one who is endeav-

oring to remember something.) O yes, thou certainly knowest him! That Lombard, one of the body-guard of Signor Fabrizio—that fellow who was seen the other day galloping on the thick wall of the bastion near the San Bacolo gate. . . ."

"O! yes, indeed!" answered Inigo; "now I remember him."

"Very well; he makes the fourth. As long as he can hold on to his hands he will know how to use them. I will be the fifth, and with God's help I shall do my duty. Masuccio, . . ." he hallooed, calling on his favorite servant; "look to the thong of the shield; it was broken yesterday; have it mended without delay; hear me; have the broadsword and the pistolese dagger well sharpened, and . . . what did I want to say? . . . Ah! is my Spanish armor in good order?"—The servant nodded an assent.

Inigo smiled at this flurry, and remarked, "Thou shalt have plenty of time to get ready; the battle will not take place to-day, nor to-morrow either."

Fieramosca did not think of that; he felt as if he had the fever, and did not wish that the fight should be put off any time; and paying very little attention to what the Spaniard was saying, he kept on thinking of other champions, because he thought that five were rather a small number. Then he said, with great emphasis,—

"Why do we leave behind Romanello da Forli? six; Lodovico Benavoli; seven. Thou knowest them, Inigo; thou hast seen them at work!"

"Masuccio! Masuccio!"

The servant who had gone down stairs, ran up again.

"Let my war-horse, Airone, the horse that Signor Prospero gave to me,—let him have straw and oats, as

much as he wants; and before it is too hot let him trot around for an hour; and look at his shoes."

These orders were given while Ettore was dressing. After his attendant had put the cape on his shoulders, and girded the sword to his side, he put on a hat with a blue feather, and said to Inigo,—

"I am ready to go with thee. Before everything else we must talk the matter over with Signor Prospero, and then we will ask Gonzalo for a pass."

Thus, as they went on their way, he kept on mentioning now one then another of the men-at-arms who might give their names for the meeting. In fact he was not so very easily satisfied at once; he examined most closely the condition, the power, the bravery, the life of every one, as he wanted only tried men to enter the lists. He thought of Brancaleone Romano more than of any one else; he knew him to be a most honorable man, of great heart, and wonderful strength of body; he liked his sedate ways, so different from the giddy cheerfulness of his comrades, and he felt so much friendship for him, that more than once he was on the point of disclosing to him his adventures with Ginevra; however, natural reserve, and, perhaps, the want of an opportunity, had prevented him from doing so. The family of Brancaleone, and in fact all his ancestors, had always been of the Ghibellines, and in Rome had adhered to the Colonna party; and now among the troops of Signor Fabrizio, he was at the head of some body-guards, and paid close attention to this as well as to any other affair connected with the war. He was of middle height, broad shoulders, large chest, of not many words, and strictly minding his own business; he was resolute, aye, obstinate, in following his own opinion; and as he had nothing more at heart in the world than

the increase of the triumph of the Colonna party, every other object appeared to him not worthy thinking of; hence he would have been willing to let himself be cut into pieces, if thereby he could advance the interests of his party.

Ettore and Inigo had to pass by his door on their way to the Colonnas. They found him standing by the stables, and giving directions about some of his horses, with his sword ungirded, the belt twisted around the hilt, pointing to the squires and grooms, and giving orders with the greatest economy of breath. Fieramosca invited him to join company with them to arrange such affairs, which, although told with the warmest terms, were listened to by Brancaleone without the least emotion or change of countenance. He only remarked, as he moved along with them,—

"Trying is belief even to the blind. Four thrusts in tierce, after my fashion, and we'll talk it over."

This assurance of his was no bravado. He had more than once fought in a camp, and always came out with awarded honors.

CHAPTER IV.

La Motte's words, overflowing with so much insulting gall, and the ensuing challenge, had been heard by more than twenty persons, and could not be kept secret; it was already in every soldier's mouth, and it was the topic of conversation in every part of the city. When Inigo and the two Italians had reached the doors of Prospero Colonna, every man in waiting was discussing the merits of the challenge; and the flower of Italian youth had flocked already around their chieftain to obtain from him advice as to the manner in which they should act. Every one of those named by Fieramosca were there already, and a great many more besides; in a very short time their number had swollen to fifty. Their words were full of indignation and magnanimous, and their very manner, their countenance, betrayed too well how much the offered insult was felt in their hearts. Several of the Spaniards, who had been at the supper the evening before, and who had reported the scene to their Italian friends, were there also, and mingled in the crowd, rehearsing now one expression, then another, as they had been uttered by Inigo or by the prisoners, and commented upon them, setting out their views on the matter, quoting authorities in parallel examples, thereby fanning a fire which was already raging.

This crowd was scattered partly on the steps of the

main entrance, and in the front yard, or in a hall in the lower story, where the Colonna brothers attended to the affairs of the company, and gave audience to their men-at-arms. The walls were all around decked with their armors beautifully inlaid with gold, of the best chiselling, polished and shining like mirrors. The standard of the company was kept in this hall; it bore a pillar on a field red, with the motto, *Columna flecti nescio.* The same arms were engraved on the shields, which were arranged in graceful order, and covered almost all the four walls. At the end of the hall two large wooden horses supported complete furnitures with saddles, and housings of beautiful crimson velvet, ornamented with the family coat-of-arms, and the costly bridles richly decked with reins embroidered in gold, as it befitted gentlemen so highly honored.

On a rail stretched across a window were perched six falcons with hoods on their heads, and tied to small silver chains, with a quantity of implements for the chase, which was so much indulged in by the aristocracy, and which was considered as an amusement proper for nobles and gentlemen. After a few moments Signor Prospero Colonna presented himself at the door, and all gave way to him and made obeisance. He advanced, bowing to every one with a dignified affability, and took a seat on a large elbow-chair covered with red leather, at the head of a table placed in the centre of the hall, where he kept his writing-desk, and beckoned to them all to be seated.

He wore a cape of black chamois worked with arabesque. A heavy golden chain, to which was attached a medallion of the same metal, both finely chiselled, hung around his neck. He carried a small dagger which was

stuck in a belt of black beaten steel. His admirable bearing receiving relief from this simple dress, his countenance pale and somewhat dark, a high forehead which seemed to be the seat of firmness and of more than ordinary wisdom, inspired every one with that reverence which bespeaks a homage paid more to the qualities of the soul than to favors of fortune or birth. His eyebrows were bushy, his beard small and trimmed in the Spanish fashion, the movements of his eyes slow and guarded; altogether you felt at once to be in the presence of a lord powerful and of great authority.

The present occasion appeared to him, and was, in fact, one of very great importance, not only because the honor of the Italian arms was at stake, but because, moreover, the issue of this contest, in such circumstances, when a war was carried on between two powerful monarchs with dubious fortune, might be fraught with serious consequences to him, to his family, to the Colonna party. To obtain victory in a challenge, which must attract universal attention, would enhance the fame of his followers and of his banner; hence whichever party should happen to be victorious, the Spanish or French, they would ultimately be more loath to give him offence, and would feel greater anxiety to secure his friendship. Moreover, whoever is conversant with Italian history knows how obstinate the strife between the Colonna and Orsini factions was in the Roman territory. Both parties had been ill-used by the power and the frauds of Alexander and of Cesare Borgia, and both, whether by foreign aid, or by their own valor, with the help of some favorable opportunity, might obtain the ascendency; consequently, if there ever was a time when opportunity was to be seized by the forelock, it was the present.

That expert leader knew the ardent soul of Fieramosca, and how powerful were in him the thirst of glory and the love of his country. He had often seen how his words had fired the hearts of his companions, and incited them to prove themselves true Italians; and he felt how at the present moment he might encourage them with his example, and with his words add fire to that divine ardor which makes man equal to the noblest undertakings.

To him therefore he addressed himself when he began to speak; he said he had already been made acquainted in part with what had taken place, but he wished to hear him relate the whole affair in detail, that they might quickly come to some conclusion. Ettore gave an account of the transaction, putting particular stress on the language held by Inigo in favor of the Italian nation. When he had done, Signor Prospero arose and spoke thus: —

"*Illustri Signori!* Were you not what you are, and had I not so many proofs of your valor through the many battles we have fought together, I would deem it necessary to recall to your minds how our ancestors raised by their noble deeds the glory of their country so high as to become the admiration of the whole world; the darkness and the misfortunes of ten centuries could not dim the last rays of so much light. Those who now come from the other side of the Alps to drink the blood of the Italians, and, moreover, add insult to injury, then trembled at the very mention of the Roman name. I would call your attention to the fact that they have carried their shameful insolence so far, that, after having torn, by such arts as God alone can reckon, the glorious crown which rendered Italy the queen of nations, and had been gained at so great an expense of labor and

blood, they still think that they have done nothing so long as they see a sword in our hands and a coat of mail on our breasts, and they even wish to deprive us of the power of struggling and dying for the protection of our honor. I would say to you: Up with you; let us go, let every one rush to arms; let us fall upon these thieves who have no regard for rights and justice; and your looks assure me that your swords would leap in advance of my word. . . . . But, still . . . . my office of leader, which on this important occasion becomes to me a real burden, enjoins upon me the duty of checking your valor, and I feel constrained to inform you, that you cannot all join in the combat, and I shall be obliged to limit the glory of our vengeance to only a few swords. The *Magnifico Gonzalo* has to uphold the rights of his Catholic Majesty with unequal forces, and will not permit his soldiers to shed their blood for distracting purposes. I shall be able to obtain, I hope, a pass and free camp for ten men-at-arms. To lose no time, I go; and as soon as I have obtained both, I will return to you. Now, let every one of you who will, write his name on a sheet of paper; let Gonzalo make the choice. But, before all, you must swear that you will abide by his decision."

Colonna's address was received with marks of fervid approbation, and all took the oath. The names were written and given to Signor Prospero, who, rising from his seat, went to the door, where two squires had a mule in readiness for him. He mounted, and with only those two attendants rode towards the citadel.

He returned after half an hour, which appeared as long as an age to the impatient anxiety of those young warriors. Having dismounted, he entered the hall, and all fell back to the seats they had occupied before. The

deep silence in the hall, and the expression of the eyes riveted on the Roman baron, showed how anxious they were to know the chosen ones, and how every one hoped to be on the list.

"*Magnifico Gonzalo*," said Signor Prospero at last, taking the papers from his bosom, and laying them on the table, "has expressed himself very much pleased with your virtuous resolution. He feels confident that the undertaking will prove an easy task to your valor; he grants a pass and free camp for ten men-at-arms. I had to work hard to prevail on him to grant such a number; and he allows it only in consideration of the importance of the matter."

Then opening the paper which contained the names of those who had been chosen, he read the following: —

"Ettore Fieramosca." The youth hearing his name called at the head of the list, pressed with joy the arm of Brancaleone who sat near by him, while the eyes of every one were turned towards him with such a look as to say that they did not feel as if they could contend with him for the first place.

"Romanello, from Forli.

"Ettore Giovenale, Roman.

"Marco Carellario, Neapolitan.

"Guglielmo Albimonte, Sicilian.

"Miale, from Troia.

"Riccio, from Parma.

"Francesco Salamone, Sicilian.

"Brancaleone, Roman.

"Fanfulla, of Lodi."

Had any one been there, who did not know the men whose names had been called, he could easily, by their look of satisfaction, know of what temper were those who had

been destined to the noble deed. A delicate purple color suffused the usually pale cheeks of Fieramosca, and while he was talking, the auburn mustachio which veiled his upper lip, could have been seen quivering, and betraying the deep emotions of his heart. At last he had met with an object worthy of the thoughts which were uppermost in his mind. Once at least, he thought, the blood of Italians will flow for a better purpose than to be continually fighting against foreign invaders. If some spirit had whispered to his heart, "thy people will obtain the victory, but thou shalt die in the struggle," he would have been a thousand times happy; but still there was well-grounded hope, aye, even a certainty of gaining a victory, and of living to enjoy it. Then he thought how their return would be heralded with honor, and feasted, and crowned with joy,—how seldom it is that a man can foretell the truth!—he thought of the praises, of the everlasting glory with which Italy and his name would be hymned, and how his dearest friends would be proud of him. At this moment a feeling arose from the inmost recesses of his heart, crossed his mind like a cloud, and veiled for an instant the joy which beamed in his countenance; perhaps foregone miseries made his heart feel the keen pang of ominous recollections; but it was only for a moment. Could he then have anything more at heart than the arrangements of the battle?

Gonzalo had appointed Prospero Colonna marshal of the lists. Then the duty of sending the challenge devolved upon him; moreover it would become his part to place his men on their horses, to see that there should be nothing wanting that might secure the victory, and to be sure that the contest would be carried on according to just and proper rules.

The first points to be decided were the day and the place. It was then the first of the month; it was determined that the combat should take place after the middle, so as to give time for necessary preparations. As to the place, competent men would be detailed to select the most suitable one.

The next business was to write the challenge, which was done in the French language, and given to Fieramosca and Brancaleone, to be carried to the French camp the same day. After everything was thus arranged, Signor Prospero addressed himself to the ten champions, and spoke thus: —

"Your honor, knights, stands on the blades of your swords, and I cannot imagine a better or surer place for it. For this very reason it becomes necessary that you should pledge yourselves solemnly, that from this day to that of the fight you will not enter upon any adventure, and thus avoid any danger of being wounded, or of meeting with any accident, that might prevent you from being on your horses that day; and you know very well, that if such thing should occur, no matter how it happened, great blame would be attached to our party." They all thought it was but right to take the precaution, and none of them hesitated to accept the proposed condition under oath.

In the mean time those who saw, with great chagrin, that there was nothing for them to do there, had left the hall one after another. Only the ten had remained. And they also went their way, after the cartel had been consigned to Fieramosca's hands. Then he, too, with Brancaleone, went home, to be soon ready on their horses, and start for the French camp.

They put on a light armor, a coat of mail, with sleeves,

and a steel cap, and, preceded by a trumpeter, they rode towards San Bacolo's gate, which led to the French encampment. At their approach the portcullis was raised and the drawbridge lowered, and they entered a part of the suburbs which had been abandoned by the inhabitants, and which had been burnt and half destroyed by the recklessness of both armies. Having traversed the suburbs, they had to cross some gardens, whence the road opened into a highway leading to the camp, which they might reach in a few hours' travel. In the suburbs Ettore fell in with some women scantily covered with rags, either leading their half-starved children by the hand, or carrying them on their shoulders, searching in those dilapidated buildings for any remnant of food that might have escaped the gluttony of the soldiers who had sacked the place; their appearance made the heart of the youth bleed; and not having wherewith to help them, he could not even bear the sight, and so spurred his horse into a brisk trot, and gained the open road.

This incident, trivial as it may appear, threw a gloom over the buoyant spirits of Ettore; and the intense joy which he felt at the approach of the battle was turned into equal sadness; he felt more keenly grieved at the miseries of Italy; and his hatred for the French, who were the cause of them, received a new impulse. He could not help expressing to Brancaleone, who rode by him, how pained he felt at the sufferings of these wretched women; and his friend, who was naturally a charitable fellow, although a life continually exposed to danger and in the midst of deeds of blood had given him the appearance of a hardened man, felt pity for them, and sympathized with Ettore over their sufferings.

Fieramosca, perceiving his softened temper, remarked, with a shake of the head:—

"These are the fair gifts we receive at the hands of the French; this is the happy state of things brought on by them! . . . But if I can once see this vile set on the other side of the Alps—" . . . And he meant to add,—we will try to get rid of the Spanish also;—but he remembered that he was in their pay, and, so breaking off suddenly, he ended with a sigh.

Brancaleone thought more of the Colonna party than of the welfare of his country, and could not fully appreciate the feelings of his friend; but sympathizing with them to a certain extent, in his own way, he answered:—

"If we could succeed in routing this army, it would not be long, perhaps, before we could taste Signor Virginio Orsino's good wines; and the cellars of Bracciano would at last be cheered by a Christian's face; and the smoke from the camp of his knaves would no more be seen near Palestrina, Marino, and Valmontone; and the denizens of those places would not be so often roused by that accursed war-cry: *Orso! Orso!* but . . . pay-day does not come every Saturday!"

From this answer Ettore perceived that although his friend joined in the wishes of his own heart, still he was very far from agreeing with him in his own motives, and he said no more. They went on for a time without uttering a word on either side.

The trumpeter preceded them at the distance of a bow-shot.

Our reader will remember the hints thrown out by the French knight about the love-affairs of Fieramosca. It was the first time his companions had heard of it, and they felt sorry at his disappointments, both because they all loved him, and because a young man who does not contribute to keep up and increase the good humor of the

mess to which he belongs, is apt to become a kind of eyesore to the company. Now while in the morning of this day the affairs of the challenge were discussed in the house of Signor Prospero, there were also some remarks made in connection with these adventures, and Brancaleone heard them. In truth, Brancaleone was very little curious about other people's business, but after they had ridden for some time in silence, perceiving that his companion was in so melancholy a mood, he felt pained, and overcoming his natural reluctance, he resolved to try whether he could succeed in making him disclose the cause of his silence; and with an expression of affectionate anxiety, he questioned him as to the cause of his being so pensive. And he did it with so much tact that he gained his purpose. Fieramosca, on the other hand, well knew how entirely he could trust his friend; besides, the misery which he felt loosened his tongue, since it becomes very easy for a heart torn with keen passions to reveal a secret. Mildly raising his eyes to his friend's countenance, he began thus: —

"Brancaleone, you ask to know that which I have never told a living soul; and I would not tell even you (be not displeased with me) did I not think that I might fall in the battle . . . and then? . . . what would become of . . . yes, yes, thou art a true friend to me, thou art a just man, thou shalt know all. Tire not in hearing me at length, because I could not narrate so many and strange adventures in a few words."

Brancaleone, with a countenance which bespoke the great interest he felt in the conversation, encouraged his friend so that Fieramosca, resolutely repressing a sigh from the heart, continued: —

"You well know that when we first heard of the

probability of a war from the Most Christian king, who intended to make a descent on the kingdom, I was a youth only sixteen years old, and was in the service of the Moro. I took leave of him, and felt it my duty to employ my life in the defence of the princes of Raona, who had been our rulers for so many years. I went to Capua; they were levying troops, and I was hired and ordered to the ramparts of the city by Count Bosio of Monreale, who had the command of the garrison. The ammunitions were all in; and there being nothing else to do for the present, we enjoyed ourselves for some time. Every evening we met at the quarters of the Count, who, having been a great friend of my father, held me in place of a son. Even before I was conducted by the Duke of Milan, it had been my wont to resort to the house of the Count; and there I became acquainted with a young daughter of his; and, children as we were, without understanding ourselves, we loved each other wonderfully. When the day arrived that I was to march toward Lombardy, the crying and adieus were beyond imagination. I remember it well, I rode a jennet, the best I ever had, and on my way out of the town, I passed under the windows of Ginevra (such was her name), and managing my horse with great gallantry, I saluted her with my hands; as it was just the peep of day, without her father or anybody else perceiving it, she threw to me a blue scarf, with which I have never since parted.

"But all this was mere play. During a whole year of my absence, my affection for her had not much abated. As I am going to tell you, when I returned, and again saw Ginevra, who by this time was full grown, the handsomest lady of the realm, a good scholar, and so fine a player on the lute that there never was any better; I

could not prevent myself from falling desperately in love with her. She well remembered the days of my boyhood; and seeing me now honored, and enjoying some fame among men-at-arms, although, prudent as she was, she did not wish to betray her feelings, still I perceived too well that she loved to hear me tell of the places of Lombardy, of the battles in which I had been, and of the courts and manners of that country; and, on my faith, if it was pleasing for her to listen to me, it was a hundred times more pleasant for me to entertain her. Things went so far that we could not live apart from one another.

"I began to see plainly what turn things were likely to take, and seriously thought of the troubles which we should encounter. We were on the eve of a war; woe to him who is embarrassed with ties of love at such times! And as formerly I had improved every opportunity of being in her company, so now, resolving upon what I thought would prove the best for both, and being satisfied that our affection was not children's play, I summoned resolution enough to avoid any show of love, and indeed tried to banish it from my heart. Things went on thus for a long time. But that struggle increased my love instead of lessening it; and while I endeavored to check it in my exterior manners, it went on working within, and almost led me astray. My countenance had lost its cheerfulness, and at night, no matter how fatigued I might be, I could not sleep, and with my imagination continually fixed on her, I felt warm tears coursing down my cheeks upon the pillow, and I had become a riddle to myself.

"We went on in this manner for several weeks, and I was in such a state, that it became necessary to take

some resolution. You guess already what the resolution was. One evening about sunset, it chanced that I met her alone in the garden. I told her of my great affection, but she blushed, and without uttering one single word, left me there in great sadness and in a condition worse than ever. From that day forward she seemed to keep at a distance from me, and scarcely, if ever, spoke to me in the presence of others; I could not endure that, and almost despairing under the weight of my disappointment, I made up my mind to go away and seek death where there was fighting. Just at that time the company of the Duke of San Nicandro was passing on their march to Rome to join the Duke of Calabria, and I made my arrangements to go with them. So, without telling her of my plans, I tried my luck once more, but she held out in the same manner. I was then obliged to believe that what I fancied was love on her part was only a dream of my imagination. I made up my mind altogether;—it was in the evening, the Duke's company had halted in the city, and were to march the following morning;—I made every arrangement to be on my horse next day. As usual, I went to spend the evening with Ginevra's father; we three only were there, and sat playing at a table; and when the fit moment arrived I informed him that I had made every arrangement to leave on the morrow; that, being tired of that idle life, I wished to take part in the wars, and begged of him to allow me to go. While the Count was praising my resolution, I kept a corner of my eye on Ginevra, to see how she would receive the information, having still some hope in my heart. Think how I felt when I saw the color of her face to change, and her eyes redden! She shot towards me a stealthy look which spoke a deal to me. I felt some

doubt as to giving up the march, but I knew that I could not do so with honor; and I was obliged, just when I felt myself to be the most contented and the happiest mortal, to carry out my unlucky resolution; hence all my misfortunes.

"Would to heaven I had dropped dead when I first put my foot in the stirrup! it would have been far less evil for both of us.

"I went to Rome, ever cursing my fate, and I just arrived when King Charles entered at one gate, and our men were beating a retreat at a furious rate through the other. A few light skirmishes took place, and I advanced so far in the midst of some Swiss, that I was left for dead, with two deep wounds inflicted on my head with spontoons. I lay ill of those wounds for a long time.

"I had received those wounds near Velletri; I was carried into town, and there I remained two months without ever hearing of Ginevra or of her father, and only from time to time very sad reports of the state of the kingdom reached us, always with additions made by the people of the house to make them appear worse, and with so much of their own inventions added to them, that I could learn nothing with any degree of certainty.

"But at last I began to recover, and, anxious to get out of so much misery, one morning I mounted horse, and rode to Rome. Everything was in an uproar of confusion there. Pope Alexander had not shown very great friendship to the King on his passage. But the affairs of the kingdom were almost ruined, and an alliance between Moro and the Venetians being on the tapis, the French would consequently be forced to retrace their steps; hence he was very much alarmed, and strengthened Rome and the castle in the best way he could. As soon

as I alighted I went to pay my respects to Monseigneur Capece, who received me with great kindness, and would by no means allow me to remain in a public house.

"Meantime the tumult in Rome was on the increase, the King's vanguard, composed of the Swiss, was shortly expected, and the citizens were exceedingly affrighted, anxiously looking after their own safety.

"At last the army appeared. Alexander and Duke Valentino had fled to Orvieto. The French troops were quartered partly in the city and partly on the Prati;* they behaved exceedingly well towards the citizens, so that all began to feel reassured. After a few days the King started for Tuscany; but still some of his leaders kept passing through Rome at intervals, avoiding thereby difficulty in obtaining provisions. Fears had almost ceased, and business was going on as usual. As I had no peace in thinking of Ginevra, as soon as I could do it with decency, I took leave of Monseigneur Capece to return home, that I might obtain some reliable information; because even to that hour I had never met a person who knew aught of her.

"So one morning I started before daybreak, with the intention of riding to Citerna before night, and from Via Julia, where Monseigneur lived, I entered Piazza Farnese, taking the way to San Giovanni's gate. At the Coliseum I met a squad of Frenchmen with baggage; and as I came nearer to them, I saw that they were carrying a litter with one of their captains on it; he seemed to be in a bad plight, as the bandage around the temples showed clearly that he must have received a wound in the head. After turning the horse one side to keep out

* A large tract of meadow land near Castle Sant' Angelo, and between the Tiber and Monte Mario.

of their way, I reined in to look at the man, and was startled by a piercing cry, when, looking in the direction of it, I saw Ginevra on horseback, riding with the party on the other side. But, oh God! how changed she was! It was a wonder I did not fall; my heart felt as if it might burst under the cuirass. Still, having some misgivings as to the real state of affairs, I feigned to go on my way, but after a while I wheeled around, and never losing sight of them, I followed the train to their quarters, with the worst fears in my own mind.

"You can well imagine I did not dare to make my appearance at Monseigneur's house, who, by that time, must think I was many miles off, and much less I dared to appear before Ginevra, lest I should hear from her what I could never bear to listen to; and yet, in my anxiety to clear up matters, I did not know what to do. Borne by the horse, who was still bent on going back to the stables of Monseigneur, I found myself in Banchi by the Chiavica, and near the shop of one Franciotto della Barca, so called from his trade, which was to transship merchandise from Ostia to Ripa Grande. He was an intimate friend of mine, and he advanced to meet me. I dismounted, and having led him aside, I told him that for some particular reason I had taken leave of Monseigneur, and it was necessary I should keep in the dark; at this he offered me a cottage he had in Borgo, and carried me there immediately. Then I made up my mind to tell him that I had seen a damsel, with whose family I was well acquainted, in company with a party of the French; and that I was anxious to know how she had fallen into their hands, in order to fly to her rescue, if necessary; and after having pointed to him the place where she had alighted, I begged of him to try to speak to some of the

menials, and to arrange matters so that, without being discovered, I might obtain some information. He was a cunning fellow, and well knew how to comply with my request. After sundown he came for me, and brought me to a tavern, where we found a clerk of his, who had already enticed one of the squires of that French baron, and pledging him freely in the cup, he made him tell the story, and we arrived there just in time to hear its particulars.

"Franciotto very easily made him reveal what I would never have wished to hear. He said, that as they approached Capua, they met with a desperate resistance; had to storm the place, which was almost entirely sacked; his master Claudio Graiano d'Asti (this, he said, was his name) entered the house of the Count of Monreale with a band of soldiers; the Count had been wounded in the assault, had been carried home, and could not defend himself any further; Graiano, on entering the sick man's chamber, was met by his daughter, who on her knees pleaded for her father and for herself. Graiano looked churlish, and rather bent on evil; but the Count, rising on his elbow as well as he could, said to him: 'Take to yourself whatever I have in this world, and take this daughter of mine for your wife; but protect her honor against the hands of these men.' And Ginevra, fearing for the life of her father and for herself, could offer no resistance. Two days after the Count died.

"I bit my hands, thinking that had I been there, she would not perhaps have fallen in that ribald's hands; but there was no help. I left the place, and wandered about the city the whole night like a madman; and more than once I was about to put an end to my life. It was only the mercy of God that kept me from doing so. The

grief, the fluttering of the heart, were such that my words could not give even a faint idea of my sufferings, and I felt such oppressive sensations in the chest that I thought I should be choked; and unable to endure a life so painful and so harrassed, I had the strangest thoughts and formed the most insane resolutions in the world. At times I resolved to kill the husband,—then to meet death in some extraordinary way so that Ginevra might know that I had come to that for her sake; and I felt a relief in the idea that it would pain her; and while passing from one exciting idea to another I felt as if I were loeing my mind. I went on in this way for several days, until one evening I resolved to try my fortune. Muffled in my cape, disguised as much as I could, and with the hood drawn over my eyes, I went to the door of her house and knocked. A servant-maid appeared at the window and asked whom I wished to see. 'Say to the lady,' I answered, 'that a gentleman just arrived from Naples wishes to speak to her; he has news from her family.'—I was let in, and led to a small room in the lower story, where a very faint light flickered from a small lamp. I was in such a state, that for awhile I felt as if I were at the entrance of heaven, and then as if I were at the very gates of hell; and the inward struggle was so violent, that I felt faint, and sank into a chair. I was kept waiting only a few minutes, which appeared to me like ages. When I heard the tread of Ginevra's feet coming down stairs, and the rustling of her gown, it seemed as if my vital spirits forsook me. She entered and remained at a little distance, looking at me; and, can you believe it, I remained there rivetted to the spot. I could not speak, not even make a sign; but as soon as she had recognized me, she uttered a cry and fell senseless on the floor. Her

cry and fall brought me to my senses; I lifted her up, and endeavored to assist her in the best manner I could, frightened as I was at the danger of the situation, and greatly alarmed lest I should be found there alone. I sprinkled her face with water from a cooling vase near by. But I believe the scalding tears which fell from my eyes and covered her cheeks had more virtue than the water, and recalled her to consciousness. I could do nothing else but take her hand and impress on it a kiss so fervid that I felt as if I would give my very soul for her deliverance. We remained thus for a few minutes; at last, trembling all over, she said: 'Ettore, if thou knewest all my sorrows! . . .'

"'I know them, alas! I know all; but I ask for no other privilege than that of seeing thee occasionally while this life of mine will last.'

"In that moment a noise was heard as if of some person moving over our heads; my blood ran cold in my veins for the fear of being found there, and of becoming a source of new sorrows to her. I took leave of her, not so much by words as by the very act of departing, hurried away from the room, and left the house less sad and with some feelings of hope.

"Meantime her husband was still suffering from his wound, and he was daily visited by many of the French gentlemen and prelates. In spite of the intense inward sufferings betrayed in Ginevra's features, there was so much expression and sentiment in her admirable countenance, which was always very handsome, that, tinted as it now was with a languid paleness, it was impossible to look at her and not be impressed by it. Her youth, her manners, and angelic features were much admired by these noblemen and had become the general topic of their con-

versation, so that even Valentino heard of it. Strange rumors were afloat about the Duke in Rome at that time. Scarcely one month had elapsed since his brother, the Duke of Candia, had been murdered at night in the streets, and he was charged with the deed; then of a sudden he threw the purple aside and took up the profession of arms entirely; and the general accounts of his life were so extravagant, that people did not know what to think of him. I at once began to fear lest the man should put his eyes on Ginevra. Unfortunately, I heard many disrespectful expressions among the populace, which my great reverence for her made me feel keenly at heart, but I was forced to keep down my resentment, lest I should reveal my condition.

"Under some pretext or other, I had, by this time, gained admission to her home, and had been introduced to that husband of hers; and although it was a sore trial to see him, still I would have suffered that and a hundredfold more for the privilege of seeing her from time to time. However, except in that first interview of ours in the garden, I never spoke to her of my affection. I knew her too well, and I knew that I should have wasted my breath.

"This Graiano d'Asti was of that sort of men whom you meet by the dozen at every corner of the streets, neither handsome nor ugly, good or bad; an excellent soldier, it is true; but he would have served the Turk provided he gave him the best pay. Ginevra's wealth had made him very rich; and he set on her the same value he would on a farm, namely, at the rate of the income.

"Many weeks had rolled by. I could see Ginevra at night, because her husband had not the least suspicion of

me. He was suffering very much from his wounds, which it took long to heal, and not having much practice in love affairs, he had very different thoughts in his head; hence I was in her company more than before.

"Meantime Valentino, busy in levying troops previous to his descent upon Romagna, made offers to Graiano d'Asti, who had by this time recovered so far as to be able to be on a saddle again. I was informed of the Duke's proposal to Graiano, and they came to terms at once. They agreed upon a squad of twenty-five lances, and Ginevra's husband thought he had the best of the bargain.

"One evening the Duke came to Graiano's to sign the contract, and they had a little supper, with the company of several French prelates, and some lances, out of service, intending to take pay under him who at that time was willing to hire anybody.

"I had some thoughts of enrolling in order to follow Ginevra's fortunes with those of Graiano, still I cannot say how it happened that I took no steps in the matter, and I did not even go to the house that evening. I went wandering through the most solitary places of the city, it being already late at night, with my mind a prey to the most distracting suspicions, neither could I get rid of certain presentiments, the most unaccountable I ever had. For many days past I had noticed Ginevra looking worse than usual, and now and then it seemed to me as if there was a cloud on her brow, a mystery which she endeavored to keep buried in her heart. I lived that night out, God only knows in what torments. But listen, now, and judge for thyself whether the heart does not sometimes foretell events in truth.

"Next day I go to her house towards evening. As I

approach the door, I hear an unusual bustle inside; a monk from Araceli, who had been ministering to her, is coming out, preceded by a light. I rush into the house—a cold perspiration seizes me!—and the maid says, 'My lady is in her last moments.'

"On the evening previous, she had swooned after supper, but they did not feel much alarmed about it. She was laid down on the bed, was wrapped in warm clothes, and becoming more easy she remained so until morning. The sun was already high, and she had not moved. One Maestro Jacopo da Montebuono, who dabbled in medicine, was then called in, and he found her almost stiff with cold. That wretch, instead of having recourse to the most powerful remedies, only gave an opinion at random, enjoining that she should be kept very quiet. But returning at a late hour, he was frightened, and crying that she was past all hopes, hurried a messenger after a priest, and without knowing how to help her and conquer that inexplicable sickness, shortly after the *Ave Maria*, the doctor himself informed the distressed family that she was dead."

Here they came in sight of the French camp, and Ettore was forced to interrupt the narrative. The herald advanced winding his trumpet, and was met by a man on horseback asking what was the object of his errand.

As he became acquainted with the motive of their journey, he reported to the officer on guard, who, in his turn, as he saw Gonzalo's letter to the Duke of Nemours who commanded the troops, ordered Brancaleone and Fieramosca to halt there, until leave had been obtained from the Duke for their entering the camp.

He offered them a hut which served for shelter to the guards of the post; but our two friends, learning that the captain's lodgings were at some distance yet, determined

to stop where they were, until the messenger had returned with an answer.

Near by, under a clump of oaks, was a fresh green sward, which, protected by the boughs of the trees, afforded a delicious resting-place in those burning hours of noon. The two warriors repaired to that spot; and having tied the horses to the trees, they unhelmeted their heads and sat down near each other, leaning their shoulders against the trunks. A light breeze cooled their brows, so one resumed his narrative with more spirit, and the other listened with even heightened curiosity.

CHAPTER V.

FIERAMOSCA continued his story in these words: "Having lost Ginevra, I felt as if it were all over with me. I left that house with my eyes so stupefied that I could not shed a tear; and in fact, but for that which took place afterwards I could not now tell whither I went and what became of me in those first moments. I roamed like a mad man, feeling like one who is dealt a two-handed blow from a spiked club on the helmet,—a whizzing in the ears at first, after which everything seems to spin round. Thus unconscious of what had happened, I passed the bridge (Ginevra's house was near Torre di Nona), and taking the way up Borgo I went to San Pietro's piazza.

"That most faithful friend of mine, Franciotto, having heard in part of my misfortune, went out to look for me, and found me on the stones near one of the columns; how it happened to me to be there I could not say. I felt two arms, which, lifting me up by the shoulders, made me sit up. I started then and saw him by my side. He began to comfort me with words full of affection, and then I began by degrees to recover consciousness. He helped me up, and with much labor led me home, where he undressed me, and put me to bed, and sat at the head of it, without annoying me with words of comfort which would have been entirely out of place.

"We spent that night without a word on either side. I was seized with a violent fever which at times made me quite delirious; and my excited imagination made me feel as if a huge figure clothed in heavy armor were bearing all its weight on my breast, and squeezing the breath out of me.

"At last a flood of tears came to the relief of afflicted nature. The clock from the castle sounded the hour of ten, and the first dawn peeped through the fissures of the windows. Hanging on the wall over my head was my sword, and twisted around it the blue scarf which Ginevra had given me many years ago. The sight of it, acting like the shaft from a bow, opened an avenue to my tears, which began to flow in torrents, and my feelings being thus relieved, my life was spared. I wept for a whole hour without ever ceasing, and I felt as if I was born again, and I could listen to others and talk. Assisted by good Franciotto, I passed the day, and towards night I resolved to get up.

"As I was fast recovering, I revolved in my mind what was to be done in so great a misfortune; being in total despair of ever being able to live any longer, and reflecting that if I allowed my grief to wear me out thus by degrees, how intolerable that kind of death would be, I resolved to die that moment, that I might fly after that blessed spirit. And as I had come to that conclusion I very foolishly thought I had made a great gain, and felt more at ease.

"Franciotto had never left me since the previous evening, but then he went out to see after some business in the ship, and promised to be back in a few moments. Laying my hand on the rapier — this identical one you see at my side — I thought to consummate the deed on

the spot. But then remembering that Ginevra was to be buried that same evening, I wished to see her once more. Then throwing my clothes around me in a hurry, and girding on the sword, and taking with me the blue scarf, the only good that was left to me, I went out.

"As I had passed over the bridge, I met the funeral. The friars of the Regola proceeding in pairs, and with them several associations of brethren singing the *miserere*, entered Via Julia towards Ponte Sisto; the bier was covered with a pall of black velvet.

"Believe me, I did not feel the least frightened at that sight; and thinking that, if not in life, we should be together at least after death, that we were travelling on the same journey, and that one room would shortly receive both of us, I followed them full of melancholy joy, with my thoughts altogether in another world, without knowing whither I was led. Having passed over Ponte Sisto into Trastevere, we entered the church of Santa Cecilia.

"The bier was laid down in the chapel in which is the tomb of the son of Santa Francesca Romana. I kept on one side, leaning against a wall, while the clergy were performing the last burial service. The final *Requiescat in pace* was heard for the last time.

"All went away in deep silence, and I remained there alone almost in darkness, only one lamp burning before the shrine of the Madonna. I heard at a distance the subdued noise and the tread of the people going home. At that moment one o'clock struck, and the sacristan, walking up and down the aisles and shaking the bunch of keys, was about to leave the church.

"As he passed by, he saw me, and said,—'we shut up;'—'and I am going to stay,'—was my reply. He

looked at me, and with a motion like one who recognizes somebody, added:—

"'Art thou the Duke's man? thou hast been too much in a hurry . . . . the door will be left ajar; and as thou art here, I will go about my business.' And saying no more, he left.

"I did not pay much attention to him; still those words made me start, but could not exactly define whether he or I were dreaming. What about the Duke? and the door ajar? What does the knave mean?—these were the thoughts of my mind.

"Still very far from the real state of things, and not fit to reason much in those moments, I soon fell back on my former resolution, and after a short interval (all was still around) I approached the bier with the sadness of death in my frame.

"Having removed the pall that covered it, and drawing my rapier which was stout and sharp, I began to pry open the coffin; it cost me a deal of labor to raise the heads of the nails with the help of that only tool I had; still I worked so perseveringly that I succeeded in raising the lid.

"That handsome body dressed in the whitest linens was wrapt in a shroud. Before I died I wished to see that angel's face once more. I knelt, and by degrees I raised the veils which seemed to deny that comfort to me. Having removed the last bandage, I saw Ginevra's countenance; it looked like a statue of wax. Trembling all over I placed my face near her's, and, almost by stealth, feeling as if I were doing something wrong, I could not help kissing her lips. There was a quiver on those lips. I almost died on the spot. 'Can thy mercy,' I said, 'O Almighty God, go so far!' And I put my

hands to her wrists. The beating of my heart almost took the breath from me. The pulse gave signs of life. Ginevra was alive!

"But just imagine how frightened I was finding myself alone there in those circumstances. If she comes to, I thought, and finds herself in this place, the fright will be enough to kill her. I did not know how to act, and I was almost frantic. With open arms I turned towards the Madonna, and prayed,—

"'O, true mother of God! grant me only to save her, and I swear to thee, before thy own Divine Son, that my thoughts are bent only on good purposes.'

"And I pledged my own heart in a solemn vow, that I would never ask of her aught that would be dishonorable, if I could succeed in saving her; and I vowed to banish totally and forever from my mind any thought of putting her husband to death, a resolution which I had for a long time entertained, determined to carry it out some time or other.

"The compassionate help of God did not fail to respond to a prayer that came so truly from the heart.

"My Franciotto who, as I have said, had gone out, saw me, on his return, taking the way to the bridge, and judging the truth in part, and fearing, as he told me afterwards, lest I should take some rash resolution, he had followed me. But being full of discretion, he always guarded against speaking to me or annoying me in such moments, well knowing that I did not need advice, but help at the proper moment. He entered the church with the rest, and he had ensconced himself in a dark corner; and he has repeatedly told me since that, when he saw me laying my hands on the rapier, he was in the act of falling upon me, and kept on the wing, that

he should not be too late; but when he saw that I was only endeavoring to open the coffin, he held back, and only at this moment, as he saw the necessity of it, he made himself known. I heard the tramp of his feet, as I had uttered my prayer; I turned around and saw him at my side. As I was on my knees, even so I embraced his knees, as of one who came to restore two lives at once, and as of an angel come from heaven to my rescue. Then arising, I began to reflect how we might with the most ease carry the woman quietly thence. At last we took the velvet pall which had covered the bier, and having turned it inside out, so that in case she came to her senses she might not know in what lugubrious clothes she was lying, and arranging the winding sheets and bandages in such a manner as to make the best couch possible, very carefully we raised her from the bier, and very softly laid her on those folds.

"The unfortunate Ginevra had not opened her eyes, only broken sighs issued from her bosom. Franciotto went to fumble in some closets, and fortunately found the cruets used for mass, and placing the narrow beak at her lips succeeded to make her swallow some drops of wine and so comfort her; but very little was given to her, and only with a view to help her strength, as we did not wish her to return to herself in such a place. Then, I at the head and Franciotto at the feet, we took the two extremities of the cloth, with the greatest care, lifted her up, and without any accident, as our Blessed Lady was with us, carried her out of the church, and through San Michele we reached Ripa, where the boats are moored. With the rest there was one belonging to Franciotto. At that moment we did not know where to find a better place and more protected. We put Ginevra on board of it; and

with the help of two or three men who guarded the bark, having made up a bed in the cabin as well as we could, I sat by her while Franciotto ran for a physician, a friend of his, a good man and trusty, that he might come to assist and bleed her if necessary.

"He had to pass by Santa Cecilia. As he arrived at the church he saw a squad of armed men who had halted before the entrance, and at first he took them to be the patrol. He endeavored to go as near them as possible, keeping close to the wall, until he succeeded in hiding himself in a favorable position near them, and saw that it was not the patrol after all. They were about thirty men, having partly pikes and partly long swords, for two hands. At some distance he saw a litter carried by two men. And he who appeared to be the leader kept an anxious look towards the church, muffled in a cloak and impatiently changing his position from one foot to another. By and by two, who looked like menials, came out of the church, and approaching him, one said: 'Eccellenza, the coffin is pried open, and empty.'

"There was great power in the words; and His Excellency, unfolding his mantle at once, with a lantern he held under it, lodged such a blow on the messenger's head as to send him sprawling on his back; and the other knave, had he not taken to his heels, would have got the worse, as that man had his hand already on the hilt of the sword. He stormed a great deal, but at last he had to leave in bitter disappointment.

"Franciotto had espied in the crowd a man with cape and mantle dressed in a lawyer's garb, and by the light of their lanterns he knew him to be that great ruffian Master Jacopo da Montebuono. The presence of such a man and in such circumstances gave rise to dark suspicions in Franciotto's mind.

"As the squad moved on its way he followed at some distance, and instead of going after a doctor he made some design on said Maestro Jacopo. He only feared that he might request some of the soldiers to escort him to his house. But, as it pleased God, when they had reached Ponte Sisto, as he lived at the head of the Via Longara, he parted company with them and took the shortest way home, while the soldiers went over the bridge. Franciotto overtook him under the arch, and having assured him that there was nothing to fear, he begged of him to go with him to Ripa Grande, where a young woman was struggling with death; and he pleaded the cause so well, that at last he succeeded in bringing him along.

"As he entered the cabin, he at once recognized Ginevra and myself, and he felt that he had fallen in a trap. Franciotto took me aside, and related to me all he had seen opposite Santa Cecilia, and what he had heard, and I began to compare data and reflect; at last the bandage fell from my eyes, and I was enabled to understand how matters stood. I closed upon Master Jacopo; I threatened the man, who, after all, was the greatest coward in the world, and I made him reveal everything. He informed me that, by order of Valentino, he had, on the evening of the supper, given the woman some medicated wine, which had thrown her in a stupor, and to help the deceit, he had pronounced her dead, so that the Duke might go, after she had been carried to the church, and carry her to his house.

"It seemed like a miracle that a plan so well concocted had been baffled; and think how I thanked God from my heart.

"Then I looked Maestro Jacopo full in the face, and

told him: 'Hear me, Master Jacopo, I might lay you down dead with this rapier of mine, but I will spare your life on the only condition that this woman's life be saved; hence set quickly to work if you wish to return alive to your people. But if you ever mention to a living soul how this affair has ended, I shall kill you like a dog, be sure of it.'

"The frightened doctor promised every thing, and went about his work in good earnest; therefore, with the advice of Franciotto, we loosened the bark from the mooring, and we went down the river to Magliana, a few minutes after the clock had struck the hour of five.

"The good master never breathed a word about the transaction.

"Meanwhile Ginevra had been restored to herself; and having opened her eyes, she turned them around with an affrighted look. For my part, being now sure that she was alive, and feeling as if I had wrought a miracle, kneeling at the head of her bed, I was pouring thanks to God from my heart. She had been comfortably lodged in a little room of the keeper of the vineyard.

"After awhile, whilst I was holding one of her hands, on which I pressed now my forehead, and at times my lips, she withdrew it, and parting my hair which fell on my face, she looked staringly at me. At last she broke out in these words: 'Is it not thee, Ettore, mine? . . . But how are we here? . . . This is not my room . . . I am in another bed. . . . Oh! God! . . . what has happened? . . .'

"At this moment Franciotto, who now and then came to the door to see how she was, made his appearance. Ginevra screamed, and throwing herself upon me all in a tremor, said: 'Help, Ettore, there he is! there he is!

O most holy Mother, help me.' I endeavored to quiet her in the best manner I could, but to no use; and she appeared to be so much afraid of good Franciotto, that her eyes looked as if actually starting from their sockets. I knew the mistake, and said to her, 'Ginevra, be quiet; it is not the Duke, but a most dear friend of mine, who loves you as much as he does himself.'

"At these words you would have seen her dismiss all fear, and turn towards Franciotto with very pleasing manners, as if she wished to offer amends. Ah! how in my heart I cursed that infamous villain!

"Then Ginevra began to beg of me to explain to her how she had come here, and I to beg of her to be, for the present, satisfied with trusting in me; to think only of her health which needed rest; and I said so much that I succeeded in quieting her; and towards morning she took a restorative and slept.

"But I slept not. I knew too well that it was folly to hope that she would remain with me, and that in spite of me and of herself, she would return to her husband as soon as her strength would allow her. Hence, I sent Franciotto to Rome in great haste to know how things stood there, and what was the talk of the city about the adventure of the night.

"Towards night he came back, bringing news that Valentino had taken up the march with his troops towards Romagna, and had taken Graiano and his men-at-arms with him. It was not known at what place he would commence operations.

"I told Ginevra of it, and informed her at last of all that had occurred; she was very much troubled in her mind, and did not know what to resolve. I laid before her at great length the reasons why she ought not to

think of returning to Rome, where Valentino might very easily find her out and mend the mishaps of the former attempt; that her husband, wrapped up as he was in the conduct of the war, and a creature of the Duke, could scarcely be of any protection to her, had he even wished it; and then how could she trace him out? I besought her, with the warmest affection, that she would not go against the almost plain will of God, who, through ways so extraordinary had brought her away, and had ransomed her from a situation surrounded by so many snares and dangers; that she ought to reflect that leaving the place, in consequence of her supposed death, we might, without any suspicion, go where she might at least wait free and tranquil to see how her fortunes and her husband's would turn; and with a warmer sense of faith, I added these words, full of determination,—

"'Ginevra! I swear to our Blessed Lady that thou shalt remain with me, as thou wert under the protection of thy mother.' Franciotto also came to my aid; so much so, that Ginevra at last, after many sighs, and finding it difficult to overcome a certain remorse which troubled her exceedingly, said to me: 'Ettore, thou shalt be my guide; it behooveth thee to show that Heaven, and none else, hath sent thee to me.'

"This resolution being formed, I addressed a few words more to the Master, with my hand on the rapier, and then I sent him to Rome with Franciotto, from whom I parted with inexpressible sorrow. We went on board a vessel with the few things we had with us, and leaving Magliana, sailed down the river to Ostia, whence we coasted all the way to Gaeta. The kingdom was overrun by the French, with whom Valentino was allied, and I did not feel safe until I was a thousand miles away

from them. Hence I made the utmost haste to leave those shores, being careful, however, not to fatigue Ginevra with too much travelling; and, as it pleased God, one evening we landed safe and sound in Messina. With a most sincere and overflowing heart, I thanked God that he had led us out of so many dangers."

As Fieramosca had reached this point of his history, he perceived some mounted men moving from the camp, and riding towards them; and he added:—

"A great deal more is left to tell thee; those fellows are coming, and I have not the time. But to conclude; we tarried very near two years in Messina. Ginevra took her lodgings in a convent, and I, who passed for her brother, visited her often.

"At that time the war between the French and the Spaniards broke out. After all, I felt ashamed of a life which seemed to me so unworthy of a soldier and of an Italian.

"Bound as I was by the vow pledged at Santa Cecilia, I could not expect that our affections would meet a virtuous end.

"All Italy was in a blaze of war; the French appeared to be the stronger of the two parties; and aside from my love for my country which impelled me to fight the most dangerous foe, I had an old grudge against the French for their many acts of insolence. Moreover, to be candid with thee, I imagined there would be more security for Ginevra under the protection of the Spanish flag, where Valentino could not reach her.

"Ginevra, high-minded as she was, approved of these reasons; and, notwithstanding her affection for me, she could not bear that I should be left behind, when there was fighting for the good of Italy, and our minds were

made up firmly. Signor Prospero was levying troops for Gonzalo; I wrote to him, and was enrolled under his standard.

"Signor Prospero was then quartered at Manfredonia; so we left Messina and crossed the sea. On the passage we met with a most extraordinary adventure.

"We had entered Taranto; and, having rested there, we left the harbor one morning to sail on to Manfredonia. A dense fog, such as generally visits those waters in May, hung over the sea, and our bark, with two lateen sails and twelve oars, swiftly glided over the smooth waters. At noon we were overtaken by four ships, within a musket shot, and we were hailed to heave-to. At first I thought to run from them; and I could have done it, because we were at the windward; but then thinking that with their artillery they might do us harm, I tacked, and complied.

"They were Venetian vessels, coming from Cyprus, and were carrying Catarina Cornaro, the queen of that island, to Venice. Satisfied as to whom we were, they did not annoy us, and we kept on our journey following on their track.

"Night had already set in; the fog had become more dense, and I blessed my luck in meeting them, as we could steer after them without danger of missing our course in so much darkness.

"About midnight, Ginevra was asleep, and only two men were on the watch, to man the sails and steer the vessel; but even they fell in a doze now and then. I was sitting on the prow, sleepless and musing. Around reigned the profoundest stillness. I thought I heard the tramp of some men's feet on the upper deck of the queen's vessel, which was only at the distance of a bow-

shot from us; I heard them talking in a subdued tone of voice, but the words sounded full of excitement and anger; I strained my hearing, and distinctly heard a woman's voice mingling with theirs, and she seemed to appeal for mercy; sobs and cries followed at intervals, as if there was an effort made to stifle them. At last I heard a splash in the water like of a body falling into the sea. Having my doubts and fears aroused, I strained my eyes, and something of a white color appeared to me afloat and struggling; I plunged into the water, and with four strokes or so I swam to it, and grasping the hem of a dress, took hold of it with my teeth and swam back to our bark drawing a body after me. My men had started at the noise; they helped me on board and the person who was with me. It was a damsel dressed only in night-clothes, her hands bound with a merciless rope, and she gave no sign of life. With some effort at last she revived. We held back at some distance from the Venetians, but they did not seem to mind us at all. We took in the sails and waited for daybreak. With the rising of the sun the weather cleared up, and we reached Manfredonia in a few hours; there I found Signor Prospero, and I lodged Ginevra with the rest at the tavern.

"Now thou wouldst like to know who the rescued damsel was, but I cannot give thee satisfaction, because I do not know it myself. She could never be prevailed upon by Ginevra or myself to give any account of her adventures. She was born in the East, and is a Saracen, most undoubtedly; she is one of the most correct and loyal women in the world; at the same time she is fierce and bold, fearless of blood or swords, and in the face of danger she is more of a man than a woman. From that

day to this she has always remained with Ginevra; and I have induced the Abbess of Sant' Orsola to receive them both in her monastery, where, owing to its vicinity, (while the war keeps us shut up in Barletta,) I can visit them often."

CHAPTER VI.

The Frenchmen who were to escort the messengers to the camp had arrived, and the two friends arose, untied their horses, and went with the soldiers.

They went through long lines of tents and barracks, surveying as they advanced the manners of those who crowded on the paths to know the why and wherefore of their coming; and having made their way through a throng of soldiers, they came upon a square enclosed by pavilions arranged in a circle, in the centre of which stood that of the captain-general. Already the flower of the *caporali* of the army had gathered together; the messengers alighted, and were introduced. After a courteous but short greeting, two camp-stools were brought in, and they took their seats on them with their backs to the entrance.

The tent was quadrangular, lined with blue drapery ornamented with golden lilies, and it was arranged in two square apartments, of equal dimensions, divided by slender columns of wood inlaid with blue and gold. At the upper end, covered with a leopard robe, was the bed, and two big greyhounds were lying asleep underneath. At a short distance, a stand upholding a forest of vials, brushes, golden chains, and jewelry, surmounted by a mirror of polygonal shape, set in a frame of chased gold, a clear proof that the genteel Duke did not disdain to pay attention to the cares of a *toilette*. It is

true, a dandy of our days would have in vain looked for a bottle of *Eau de Cologne*, but he would have found a good substitute for it in two large gilt vases, one of which was labelled *Eau de Citrebon*, and the other *Eau Doreè*. Armors of different forms were hanging from the columns, resting upon hooks, lances, and pikes, horizontally suspended from pillar to pillar, arranged like trophies.

In the centre sat Louis d'Armagnac, Duke of Nemours, Viceroy of Naples, chosen by Louis XII. commander-in-chief of that war. He was dressed with a blue cape lined with sable-skin, and his noble countenance beamed with youth, boldness, and knightly courtesy. D'Aubignì, Ivo d'Alegre, Bayard, Mgr. de la Palice, and Chandenier stood at his side, and all around were barons and knights of minor grade, who formed a crowd in the midst of which Ettore and Brancaleone found themselves.

The second of the two knew better how to handle a sword than to make a speech, and so he left to Fieramosca the duty of explaining the nature of their errand.

The youth arose, and turning around with a rapid look, which flashed with a boldness void of insolence, as it behooved such place, such hearers, and the subject of his address, he told of La Motte's insult, explained the terms of the challenge, and to comply with the usual forms, having unfolded the brief, he loudly read the following words:—

HAUT ET PUISSANT SEIGNEUR LOUIS D'ARMAGNAC DUC DE NEMOURS.

Ayant apprins que Guy de La Mothe en présence de D. Inigo Lopez de Ayala a dit que les gens d'armes Italiens étoient pauvres gens de guerre; sur quoi, avec

votre bon plaisir, nous respondons qu'il a meschamment menti, et mentira toutes fois et quant qu'il dira telle chose. Et pour ce, demandons qu'il vous plaise nous octroyer le champ à toute outrance pour nous et les nostres, contre lui et les siens, à nombre egal, dix contre dix.

DIE VIII APRILIS MDIII.

PROSPERO COLONNA.
FABRITIO COLONNA.*

After he had read the brief, he threw it down in the midst of the assembly, at the feet of the Duke; and Bayard, having with the speed of the lightning unsheathed his sword, picked it up with the point of it. Ettore had made a little pause in his speech, and as he was at the point of concluding it, his attention was attracted by a well-polished and brilliantly shining shield which hung before him, and reflected the image of those who stood behind his shoulders. He perceived in it the image of Graiano D'Asti. That sight disconcerted him; and turning around, he saw there standing, two steps from him, listening with the rest, the husband of Ginevra. Such a discovery, so sudden and unforeseen, unnerved him, and almost disabled him from giving to the conclusion of his speech that point and strength which it was his wish to impart to it. Those who were not in the secret of Ettore's adventures, attrib-

* *To the high and powerful Lord Louis d'Armagnac, Duke of Nemours:*

We have been informed that Guy de La Mothe has said in presence of D. Inigo Lopez de Ayala that the Italian men of war are poor soldiers on the battle-field; to this, with your good pleasure, we do reply that he has villanously lied, and he will lie every time, and as long as he shall repeat the same. And for this purpose, we request that it be your pleasure to grant us a free camp for a trial of ourselves and ours, against him and his, with equal numbers, ten on each side.

PROSPEO COLONNA.
April 8th, 1503. FABRITIO COLONNA.

uted this accident to motives far different from the true ones, thus doing great wrong to the honor of Fieramosca. Some amongst the French warriors even smiled, and others whispered in their neighbor's hearing, that there was not much to fear from such who seemed to falter at the very name of a fight. The youth noticed both the acts and the words, and felt his cheeks burning with the fire of disdain; but he reassured his mind with the thought, "let them try, and see whether I fear."

The Duke's reply was not wanting in either words or arrogance, and the more so that he also had been led from the change of countenance to impute timidity to the Italian.

The parley was over in a few minutes, and the two messengers were accommodated with refreshments for themselves and their horses in tents near by.

Graiano had also recognized Fieramosca; and when they had left the Duke's quarters, he followed him. He approached and saluted him with that careless and unmeaning countenance indicating one who valued the gifts of fortune more than those of virtue; he had known him in a poor condition, and he did not think he had bettered himself much since they had met. "O!" said he, "Sir John. . . . No, Sir Matthew. . . . The devil! I cannot remember it. . . . Well, it makes no difference. And so, those who do not die see each other again, eh!"

"Just so," answered Fieramosca, who, in spite of the generosity of his character, could not check a feeling of disappointment in seeing a man whom he thought to be in another world, still living, and the just and rightful possessor of her whom he loved above his life. He manfully strove to add something to that dry "just so,"

but to no use, and kept silent. Graiano was not a man to understand these half colors; seeing that the conversation was likely to drop there, he added:—

"And so, what are we about? We go for Spain, eh?"

These questions, in the plural number, sounded to Ettore rather too malapert; and he answered:—

"What are we about? You, I do not know. I am a lance in Signor Prospero's service."

"Eh! take care of that old saying," answered the Piedmontese with a smile:—

"*Orsini, Colonna, e Frangipani*
Riscuotono oggi e pagan domani."

(Orsini, Colonna, and Frangipani collect to-day, and pay to-morrow.)

This motto was very common among the Italian soldiers of fortune, and it arose from the great pressure for money in which the barons of the Campagna Romagna often found themselves, who, therefore, were more earnest in getting what belonged to others, than they were prompt in paying their own soldiers.

Fieramosca at that moment was not in a mood to joke, and so he made no reply. However, not to appear uncourteous, he asked him about his life, and why he had left the Valentino.

"O!" Graiano answered, "because that man expects too much, and has too many irons in the fire; if the Pope should die to-day or to-morrow, everybody will pounce upon him, and will make him pay back both principal and interest. Well, the less said of that gentleman the better. Now, I am settled here, and I am so well pleased that I would not change even with the Pope."

During this dialogue, they had reached the tent where luncheon had been prepared. When they had finished a

hasty repast, and the cloth was removed, they were recalled before the Duke for an answer.

The reply was, of course, full of boldness and bragadocio. The French were ready to fight; they insisted upon having the number of ten increased to thirteen; which number was held as unlucky, and chosen to portend misfortune to the Italians.

A sealed letter for Gonzalo was given to the messengers, and accompanying it a list of the combatants chosen on the part of the French.

Being thus dismissed, they returned to their tent to wait for their horses. Meantime, many flasks of wine were brought in and pledges were exchanged in company with many knights, among whom was Bayard. Bayard requested Fieramosca to let him see the names. Ettore took the paper from his bosom, and gave it to him; then all pressed closely around Bayard, and he read the following names: —

"Charles de Tourges.
"Marc de Frignes.
"Giraut de Fosses.
"Martellin de Lambris.
"Pierre de Liaye.
"Jacques de la Fontaine.
"Eliot de Baraut.
"Jean de Landes.
"Sacet de Jacet.
"Guy de la Mothe.
"Jacques de Guignes.
"Naute de la Fraise.
"Claude Grajan d'Asti."

"Claudio Graiano d'Asti!" exclaimed Fieramosca, staring at the man in amazement.

"Yes, Claudio Graiano d'Asti," he answered. "Don't you think I am as big as the rest?"

"But tell me, *Messer* Claudio, do you know why this challenge has been sent?"

"What? am I deaf? to be sure I know it."

"Well, then you know that the Italians have been branded as poltroons and traitors by these French, and for this we are going to fight. Now, tell me, from what place do you hail?"

"I hail from Asti."

"And is not Asti in Piedmont? and is Piedmont in Italy or France? and will you, an Italian soldier, fight with the French against the honor of the Italians?"

Fieramosca's eyes sparkled with fire as he spoke these words. He would have used stronger terms, but he thought of the vow which prevented him from laying hands on that fellow.

Graiano, on the other hand, whose way of thinking was a thousand miles apart from that of Ettore, could not understand what all these questions aimed at. He understood him at last, and what he had said appeared to him as the most absurd thing in the world; therefore, as if he would not condescend to give a direct and sensible answer, he turned to his comrades, and said with a smile:

"O! hear him; hear his nonsense! One might suppose it was the first day he took a lance in his hand! I care not a fig for the Italians, Italy, and those who love it; I serve those who pay me, so I do. Don't you know, my clever boy, that a soldier's country is that from which he receives his pay?"

"My name is not *clever boy;* my name is Ettore Fieramosca," answered Ettore, who could not contain himself any more; "and I know nothing of these poltroon

sentiments of yours. And if it was not" . . . and here his hand involuntarily ran to the sword, but he withdrew it immediately, and went on speaking with such a contraction of features as we perceive in those who are forced to swallow a bitter morsel.

"One thing I cannot stand, by ——. How can you, noble gentlemen, and you, Sir Bayard, the first man in the world in our profession, and the most loyal, and the most honest of all, how can you all stand, hearing this Italian casting such shame into the face of his country? But everybody knows that there are traitors in every nation."

"Thou art the traitor!" thundered the Piedmontese. Both drew their swords, but did not unsheath them entirely, as many from both sides, rushing between, held them back, and made them remember that messengers neither could receive nor offer affront. The uproar and the tumult was very great; but Bayard's voice, which drowned all the rest, restored peace and order among all, and Graiano was dragged away by main force.

Fieramosca, as he replaced the sword, and rammed it in heavily with the palm of his hand turned to Bayard and offered an apology for what had taken place. The latter placed both his hands on his shoulders and looked at him fixedly in the face, so that the youth, half abashed, lowered his eyes; after remaining thus for a few moments, he kissed his brow, and said: —

"*Benoiste soit la femme qui vous porta.*" (Blessed be the woman who bore thee.)*

An hour after, the drawbridge of Barletta was lowered, to receive Ettore and Brancaleone on their return.

* Oh! how many such youths are now mowed down for the love of their country on the bloody fields of Lombardy!

CHAPTER VII.

During that morning, which had been spent by the Italians in preparing themselves for the fight, the travellers, whom we have left on the previous evening, occupying the upper part of the Sun Tavern, had not been idle. Their name is a secret for every one, except for the capo-quadra Boscherino, but it shall be no secret for our readers. One of them was Cesare Borgia, Duke of Valenza, whereby he obtained the name of Valentino, and the other Don Miguel de Corrella, one of the leaders of Borgia's band.

It would be falling very far from the truth to compare these two ribalds to the most obnoxious animals, most hostile to every living being. The latter act from instinct, and instinct has its defined limits. But what restraint from evil can be placed on hearts full of perversity, and led by minds of diabolical astuteness, endowed with power and valor — because, unhappily, not all rascals are cowards — and with immense resources?

The son of Alexander VI., the terror of Italy and of all Italians who had gold, domains, or handsome women, found himself almost alone in a poor dwelling, in the midst of a crowd that would willingly buy at the price of their lives the satisfaction of wrecking their vengeance upon him.

Those who cannot understand how much security can

be felt by a spirit of strong temper, united to a cool and calculating judgment, will call this assurance the boldest temerity. But the Duke knew himself well; and balancing on one side the danger he might incur, and on the other the gain he could obtain from a visit to Barletta, he found that the probabilities were in his favor.

He undertook this journey for two reasons. One was to find out Ginevra, who he had good reason to believe was with Fieramosca; and if we cannot make up our mind to believe that this man cared for her more than for any other woman, we are at least sure in saying that he was sharply stung at the idea of having been made game of. The other was a political reason; and in order that our readers may have a clear idea of this part of our history, it becomes necessary to call their attention to the dark features of the politics of those times.

The power of the Borgia family had sprung up with the elevation of Rodrigo Lenzuoli to the See of Rome; and through the influence of every kind of arms and resources, of frauds, of intermarriages, and with the help of France, it had acquired so much strength, that every prince, every republic in Italy, was in dread of it. Cesare had at first been made Cardinal; but then, dissatisfied with his situation, made up his mind to secure to himself alone the inheritance of his father, and to obtain the guerdon of crimes committed by joint perversity. The only obstacle thrown in the way of his ambition was the Duke of Candia, his brother, *Gonfaloniere* of the Church, for whom the Pope had reserved some principality in Italy. A stiletto, hired by Cesare, or, as some others say, wielded by his own hand, cut off this obstacle one night. A poor man, who was at the watch on one of the coal barks at Ripetta, saw three men coming towards the river; one

on horseback, — it was the Duke; the body of his brother, laid behind him, was held by two men at the head and at the feet, across the back of the horse; they threw it in the Tiber, then washed the horse, which was stained with blood, and disappeared through a dark lane.

A month after this, the Duke doffed the purple, and was on his horse at the head of an army. Partly by force and partly by treason, he was soon in possession of Faenza, Cesena, Forli, Romagna, and part of the Marche, Camerino, and Urbino. But his way of making conquests, and of holding possession of the ill-gotten domains, — the evils he had inflicted on so many were such, that he was hated by all, and only an opportunity was wanted to give vent to this general feeling. That opportunity might present itself in two different ways, either by the death of his father, or by losing the support of France. The Pope's age, and the unreliable success of the French arms in Italy, admonished him that it was necessary to secure support to his personal cause from other quarters when the present should fail.

With an eye that could espy any practice, and pry into the closest of hearts, he at once saw the real condition of things in Italy. He well knew the impetuous ardor of the French, who were more apt to carry a day than to endure the *ennui* of a long and fruitless war.

He felt how much Gonzalo could abate their ascendancy in Italy. He knew the Spaniard had become terrible for his valor, prudence and perseverance, and was very likely to crush the beauty of the lilies. He thought it would be wise to make some overtures to him, in order that he might have a new resource when his old friends might abandon him. But so delicate a matter, and such that if the French knew of it, he would have

been ruined, could not be committed to any one's trust. For this reason he had left Sinigaglia clandestinely, and had gone to Barletta.

It was an hour before day when Valentino, whose iron constitution scarcely needed any rest, called Don Miguel, who was hearkening lest he should be wanted, and giving him a letter, said:—

"This to Gonzalo. He will give you a safe-conduct. Should he inquire after me, I am not in Barletta but near by. Yesterday evening I heard all the particulars about Ginevra from those soldiers who were carousing below stairs. I am satisfied now that she is with that Fieramosca, and not very far from here; I should think in some part accessible by sea. I want to know before vespers where she is. Find out Fieramosca, and see that they do not escape."

Don Miguel received the letter and the command of his master without saying a word; he went back to his room, dressed himself, and as daylight appeared, drawing the hood over his eyes, went to the citadel.

The Duke was at the window, following the course of Don Miguel as the latter left the house; there was evil in the Duke's eye, and his countenance looked as if it foreboded misfortune to others. And still of all the ribalds he had in his pay,—and he had some who had attained to a very high degree of perfection,—none could be said to be the soul of all his undertakings as was this one; and if faith could be placed in a fellow of that stamp, he certainly had given signal proofs of his fidelity to his master on occasions of great importance. But Cesare Borgia hated him for the very reason that he was very much indebted to him, and because he could not get rid of him when he chose, unless he wished to cut off his own right arm.

Very few persons knew the history of this man. According to the general opinion he was from Navarra. To give an insight into his character, we will narrate an extraordinary act of revenge committed against his own brother, which was the occasion of his becoming one of the Duke's servants.

Don Miguel was married to a young and handsome woman; and he had a younger brother, unmarried, living with him. The young man was so fascinated with the beauty of his sister-in-law, that, throwing away every feeling of decency and respect, he brought her over to his wishes. But they were not guarded enough to escape notice from a young servant girl; she betrayed them. The husband watched them, and saw their guilt; and as he drew a poignard to stab them both at once, they managed so well as to escape from him only with a scratch. His resentment for the injury inflicted upon him was so great that, pursuing his brother and wife, who fled for their lives, he was determined to kill them by all means. But his brother, hearing that Don Miguel had sworn his death, knew how to hide himself so well that he succeeded in baffling all his plans for many years; and this galled the outraged husband so fiercely, that, despairing of ever quenching his thirst for vengeance, he was almost spent by this devouring passion.

The jubilee of 1475 was proclaimed, and the usual practices of penance were performed in the town where Don Miguel lived; processions, penitential devotions, and preaching in the public squares, brought around, as usual on those occasions, the good results of public reformation; many an inveterate hatred was quelled, reconciliations took place, and he also seemed to have abandoned his feelings of resentment, and given himself

up to God. His brother, however, notwithstanding all the advances on the part of Don Miguel, could never be prevailed upon to appear before him. At the close of the *Anno Santo*, spent by the Spaniard in continual practices of penance, he resolved to leave the world, and repairing to a monastery, took the habit and professed religious life. He was sent by his Superiors to various places in Spain, and even to Rome, where he completed his studies, with the fame of possessing no ordinary talents.

Thence being recalled to Spain, he gave so good accounts of himself, that he was thought fit to be promoted to the priesthood. He celebrated his first mass with customary solemnity in the presence of relations and friends. When mass was over, he went to the vestry, and, according to the practice, still dressed in the sacerdotal robes, he received the congratulations of the people and of his friends, admitting them to his embraces, or to the kissing of his hands.

Many people had heard him repeatedly protesting that nothing filled him with so much grief as the recollection of the intense hatred he had for so long a time nourished against his brother; and he had often said that he had no other wish in the world than to be able to efface the past entirely, and that he would even, like a faithful servant of the Lord, be the first to humble himself. On this solemn occasion, his brother, moved by the entreaties of all his kin, resolved to present himself along with the rest. As he appeared in the clergyman's presence, he stretched forth his arms, and was beginning to speak. Don Miguel received him in his open arms; but then the beseeching brother, instead of raising his head, was seen to drop on his knees, fall backward with a deep groan; and the priest brandishing in the air a small stiletto, which he

had plunged into his brother's heart, while he was pressing him to his own, kissed the ensanguined blade, and kicking the corpse, said,—"at last!" and disappeared. The bystanders were thunderstruck, and so horrified, that they did not move; and the monster was allowed to escape.

A price was then set on his head; he wandered from place to place, until he repaired to Rome, and Valentino saved his life. The latter easily discovered the nature of Miguel's soul, and soon employed him in affairs of the highest importance; and the ribald became, in short, the prime agent in all his undertakings.

As Miguel reached the gates of the castle, on being asked by the guards whom he wished to see, he pointed to a small coffer under his arm, and told them that he had just returned from the East, and wished to see Gonzalo, to offer him several samples of very great rarity, powerful remedies against charms, and a thousand like rigmaroles. One of them, after having scrutinized his face very closely, beckoned to him to follow.

They entered a large yard, enclosed all around with high buildings of ancient architecture. The rooms in each story had their doors opening on piazzas running all around the yard. These piazzas were supported by columns of gray stone, and over them were vaulted arches either round or pointed, according to the different epochs in which they had been added. Several turrets, round and crowned with merlons in the shape of swallow-tails, arose at unequal distances high above the level of the roof, and were of a reddish color like that of old bricks. From the top of the highest, which was called the clock-tower, streamed a large flag, yellow and flaming red, the colors of Spain.

They mounted to the first story,—following outside

steps, with wide stone balusters, on which were squatted in a direct line lions of very rough workmanship, — and entered a hall where Don Miguel was left by his guide, who said to him: —

"You can speak to the Great Captain when he comes out."

"And, pray, when will he come out?"

"When he pleases."

And with this not over-courteous reply, the soldier went about his business.

Don Miguel knew very well that patience is the goddess of antechambers, and held his peace. He was soon aware that he had become a mark for the curiosity of some gentlemen who had clustered within the embrasure of one of the large windows which opened over the sea. In order to take a position, he began to move about, looking at the old pictures, with which the walls were covered. Thus with an air of *nonchalance* he went very near to them — perhaps, he thought, I might do some good here! At last he caught the moment to throw in a word or two, and after awhile he was one of the company.

That good luck which is almost always prayed for uselessly by honest folks, did not keep our friend long in waiting. He watched with a piercing eye those gentlemen, and selected one especially from the rest. He was a man nearly fifty years of age, tall, thin, with one of his shoulders slightly out of proportion; he dragged at his side a long sword which stuck out from under his gaberdine, and punched the shins of all around; for he was fussing about, scraping bows and putting on airs of importance, making himself intimate with every one, but more especially with those who were of higher standing.

Eyebrows which formed two arches high up to the middle of his forehead, and eyes gray, round, and always looking wonders, gave to his countenance an expression of inquisitiveness, mixed with stolidity; and this trait was made even more marked by a continual smile with which he accompanied his whole conversation. This good knight was Don Litterio Defastidiis, the *Podesta** of Barletta, than whom no man was more inquisitive or more vain.

Don Miguel, who was a great physiognomist, saw at once that he had met the man he wanted. He approached, and began a conversation with him, addressing him in a manner courteous and frank, which he knew very well how to use when he needed it. The Podesta never added a phrase, without some pleasantry of the *obligato* kind — such pleasantry as must be surely familiar to the reader who may have happened to travel through some small places of the Regno and spend an evening on the settee before the apothecary shop; — but the Podesta always expected that people should laugh. Don Miguel, of course, would be in a roar of laughter all the time, and would interrupt the worthy dignitary, saying: "I never knew a pleasanter man — oh! that is beautiful — oh! how amusing!" — and thus they became boon companions in less than half an hour.

At that moment Prospero Colonna came out of Gonzalo's room with the safe-conduct for the challenge, crossed the hall, and all bowed to him as he passed. Don Miguel asked who the baron was; and Don Litterio enjoyed the opportunity of parading his knowledge of affairs, and spoke of the challenge, and related what had taken place at the supper of the night before, and had a

* A kind of mayor or moderator.

great deal to say of Ettore Fieramosca and his amours. Don Miguel, who had obtained more than he hoped, said, feigning to take great interest in the matter: —

"That young man . . . . what do you call him?"

"Fieramosca."

"This Fieramosca is then a great friend of yours, that you take so much interest in him."

"Oh! for that he is one of my dearest friends. And see, he is very much esteemed by Signor Prospero; then he is a great favorite with all. . . . . He is such a brave young man! We meet every evening either at the Colonnas or in the square. It is a pity he has a very ugly habit. He never laughs, never! He has a face so long, just as if he were excommunicated; it is painful to look at him. Eh! I had taken notice of it long ago; but they would not believe me. Those brave soldiers are queer fellows! It seems as if they were ashamed to be in love! But that French baron who has been made prisoner by him, and who had known him in Rome, let it out; and so now there is not the least doubt. There is too much truth in the old saying: — *Amore tosse e scabbia, non la mostra chi non l'abbia,*" (only those who have it, will give signs of love, cough, and itch).

Don Miguel of course received this pleasantry of the first magistrate of Barletta with a great laugh, which he had to repeat three times, because it was Don Litterio's gratification to quote the proverb three times in succession. When this fit of mirth had passed away, and the two companions had become composed again, the Spaniard remarked,—

"It would not be difficult for me to cure him of this love-sickness, and so well that he would never more think of it. But" . . . .

And here he paused in order to be importuned.

"To cure him?" quoth the Podesta, "how could you do that? A fever of that kind is not cured by doctors and apothecaries."

"And I tell you, that if I could only find one who was an intimate friend of his, who would help me, I could do it, and I would stake my head on it."

Don Litterio looked at him staringly in the face, to know whether he was joking or in earnest; and it would be useless for us to remark that Don Miguel knew very well how to make that investigation turn to his purpose. When the former seemed satisfied as to his friend's being in earnest, he added: —

"If nothing else is wanted, you shall have it."

And he thought in his own mind how to secure to himself the merit of this cure, as he claimed for himself the honor of having made the discovery of the disease. And most assuredly, whoever could have achieved the miracle of making Fieramosca more approachable, and partial to noise and jollity, would have been praised to the skies by his friends and by all who knew him.

Then Don Litterio kept on urging Don Miguel to tell him how he could achieve so difficult a result; but the latter was very morose, allowing the other to pray and beseech, as if he were afraid to trust him. At last, feigning to yield, he told him, how, in the land of the Turks, he had learned to apply a remedy which had a wonderful power to extinguish any love, however desperate. It did not cost him much to master, in a very short time, the hare-brained head of the unfortunate Podesta, who thought himself very fortunate in having met this man.

"One condition is indispensable," said Don Miguel at

last; "that is, that I may be in company with the *inamorata* for five minutes; then leave the rest to myself."

"To tell the truth, I could not on the spot direct you how to obtain the interview. Because, in fact, I do not know her. But you can depend on me, provided she is in Barletta, or within ten miles. In less than twenty-four hours I shall be able to give you some information. I will speak to Giuliano . . . he is the messenger of the Commune . . . he is a real devil to find out every thing."

"And where shall we meet?" asked Don Miguel.

"Anywhere."

"If it is agreeable to you we will meet at the tavern of the Sun, about twenty-two of the clock."

"Agreed," answered Don Litterio; and leaving Don Miguel exceedingly pleased with his good success, he went to the palace of the Commune to find out Giuliano. If it is perfectly agreeable to the reader we will dispense with keeping him company, lest Don Miguel should get too much out of patience in the antechamber.

He patiently waited a long time, hoping that Gonzalo would make his appearance; at last he prevailed on the usher to be marshalled in.

The Captain of Spain was standing upright near a window. He was wrapped in a loose robe of vermilion satin, lined with meniver skin; and the noble appearance, the high forehead, the scrutinizing eye, and lastly, the very name of a man who was so great, awoke in the bosom of Valentino's agent those feelings of awe, and even of cowardice, which invariably assail a wicked mortal in the presence of a virtuous man. With an air of great humility he made a very low bow, and said:—

"Glorious Lord! the importance of the message I

carry to your *Magnificenza* has forced me to assume a name which is not my own. If I have offended you by doing so, I humbly beg your pardon; but as you will perceive by yourself, the necessity of keeping secret was too great, and he who sends me to you could trust himself to none but to your glorious faith."

Gonzalo answered in a very few words that he would not betray those who trusted in him, and bade him to give the message. Don Miguel gave him the Duke's letter, obtained the safe-conduct, and carrying it to his master, assured him that Gonzalo would keep the secret of his being in Barletta.

Then he told him how much aid he could promise himself from his new friend, the podesta; and so Valentino, pleased with the turn which his schemes seemed likely to take, drew the hood over his eyes, and, wrapped in his cloak, left the tavern. A boat rowed him to the back of the citadel, where Gonzalo, after an agreement with Don Miguel, had sent a man to wait for him. A small gate was opened to him; and ascending a narrow, secret stairway, they passed through dark winding passages, until he reached the Captain-General's apartment.

We do not deem it to be of much importance to give a detailed account of this interview.

Valentino gave a substantial resumé, with admirable clearness, of the actual state of things in Italy, — the nerve, the hopes, the apprehensions of the different states. He led the captain to believe that it would gratify him to attach himself to Spain, feigning to be moved to take this step out of anxiety for the welfare of his people, and to avert the calamities which they would be exposed to, in case the Spaniards should gain the victory. With an

ingenuousness which he could at times command most admirably, he succeeded in giving to the great general a far better opinion of himself than was generally entertained. He proposed to form an alliance with Spain, in which the Pope would join, and in which a chance would be left for the Venetians, in case they would take part; by it they would pledge themselves to help each other in their mutual interests, and it would be made public only when the Spaniards had obtained possession of two thirds of the Regno. He proposed to make the conquest of Tuscany with his own forces, showing the importance of it by the fact, that the Florentines were the stanchest friends of the French in Italy, and that it would be of paramount necessity to break this powerful alliance. He added, that it would largely increase the strength of the league, to call the Pisans to enter into it, helping them thereby to recompense themselves for the evils they had suffered from the Republic of Florence, over which, if they could have been made stronger, they would have become most watchful guardians.

Gonzalo had no objections of great weight to offer to these proposals; and the cunning mind of Cesare Borgia knew how to place in the strongest light matters which were in great part true. But the Spaniard knew him, and did not feel warranted in placing any trust in him.

He resolved then not to give any definite answer, and said he would take the opinion of his most intimate advisers before coming to a final determination. He was very lavish of good words and courteous manners towards Valentino; he led him to some apartments on the lowest story, which opened over the sea, and he placed them at his disposal for the time he would be pleased to remain in Barletta; and he directed some of his most faithful

servants to wait on him with that attention which was due to a son of Alexander VI.

Towards evening, Fieramosca and Brancaleone arrived at the gates of the city. As soon as they had entered, a crowd of officers, men of arms, and soldiers began to crowd upon them, and their number increased as they went on; all very anxious to be the first to know the answer of the French. — How did you get along? — what is the reply? who will enter the lists? when? where? . . . . But the two friends, smiling at so much fury, calmly answered: — Come to the rock, and you will know it. As they reached the citadel, and were introduced to Gonzalo, Fieramosca handed him the letter of the Duke of Nemours, which the General read aloud, and in which it was said that the challenge was accepted, but free camp was refused. This seemed very strange to all, and the great captain remarked: —

"I could never believe that the French would seek to avoid the fight. But you shall have a free field; be sure of it."

Then he called one of his secretaries, and said to him, "Write to the Duke of Nemours to be of good cheer, that the obstacle is removed; I offer him a truce until after the fight; and lastly, that after three days I expect my daughter Elvira, in whose honor I intend to have a little feast; if he chooses, while the arms are laid down, to come and enjoy them with us, he will contribute to make it more cheerful."

Between writing, expediting the letter, and receiving an answer, scarcely two hours had passed. The Duke of Nemours accepted the invitation and the truce, which was proclaimed through the city that same evening at the sound of trumpet, together with the names of the

Italian combatants, to which, to complete the number required by the French, three men had been added; and their names were:—

Ludovico Aminale of Terni.
Mariano da Sarni.
Giovanni Capoccio Romano.

CHAPTER VIII.

SANTA ORSOLA was the titular saint of the monastery situated on the island between Mt. Gargano and Barletta. The only vestige of it that remains at the present day is a heap of ruins covered with ivy and briars. But at the time of our history it was an imposing structure, of sombre appearance, kept in excellent repair, erected in olden times by the tardy repentance of a princess of D'Anjou. After a life nearly exhausted in pursuits of pleasure and ambition, she withdrew thither to spend her last days in works of repentance and atonement. There one can enjoy a sweet solitude in perfect seclusion. On a rock about forty-five feet above the level of the sea rose a plateau of near fifteen hundred feet in circumference, the soil of it being very rich. The church stood on the corner nearest to *terra firma*. The entrance to it was under a tasteful portico supported by handsome columns of gray granite. The aisles of the church, flanking the nave, were vaulted on pointed arches, poising on *fasces* of slender columns ornamented with carvings. The light was admitted through long Gothic windows of stained glass, representing the life and deeds of the martyred Ursula. The *absis* behind the high altar was semicircular, with mosaics on grounds of gold. They represented the Eternal Father in glory, and Saint Ursula, surrounded by her virgin companions, at his feet.

The church was rarely visited, as it was very much

out of the way. But at stated hours in the day and at night the nuns would meet there for psalmody. It was towards evening, and the inmates of the monastery had assembled at vespers, and during the monotonous singing of the psalms, a woman could be seen kneeling in prayer near a tomb of marble once white, but now rendered yellowish by age; it was surmounted with a canopy also of marble, and with an exuberance of chiselled foliage and animals in the Gothic style.

At first sight, that woman so pale and motionless, covered with a flowing white veil, might have been taken for a statue of the foundress, who lay beneath the tomb. But, on closer observation, the beholder saw two long tresses of auburn hair peeping from under the veil, and the occasionally upturned face disclosed two blue eyes, from which a prayerful light was beaming.

The unhappy Ginevra, for she it was, felt the need of prayer, because she was in that state in which the heart of a woman finds no resources to conquer itself. She regretted, however, too late, that she had followed Fieramosca, and thus attached her fortunes to him, to whom, more than to any one else, prudence and duty forbade her to cling. To have neglected so long ascertaining whether her husband was alive or dead, was to her a source of reproach. Reason whispered to her: it is not too late to do what ought to have been done long ago; but the heart interfered, and said, *'tis* too late. That *too late* sounded as a sentence without appeal. Her days were full of anxiety, anguish, and bitterness. She had no hope of getting rid of her trouble but by putting an end to the contest of her feelings. Her constitution was suffering under this perpetual struggle.

She had some comfort in the morning, and at the hours

of mid-day. She could work at the needle, she had plenty of books to read, and she walked in the garden of the monastery. But towards night! Like those insects which at the setting of the sun seem to multiply and to double their energy to vex man, so the most annoying cares, and most ominous thoughts crowded upon her mind and soul, and made her wretched. Then she would run to the church for relief. She could find no peace, no joy there, but she drew some comfort at least from prayer.

The purport and the spirit of her prayer was ever the same. "Most blessed mother, make me wish not to love him;" sometimes she added, "O! nerve me to resolve to seek after Graiano, or cause me to have the wish of finding him out." Alas! very often she had not the heart to utter this last prayer.

Sometimes it happened that, from the habit of repeating this prayer so often, she caught herself thinking in earnest of Fieramosca, when she was just praying for grace to forget him. In that torture of her soul she sobbed and cried, but she could not deceive herself as to which was the strongest wish of her heart. However, on this day, in one of those ups and downs which are so usual in our human nature, she thought at last that she could brace herself up to resolve on the true course. Her failing health made her feel as if she would soon be very ill; then she thought of death. What! to meet death with an accusing conscience? This struck her forcibly, and threw the weight on that side of the scales; she resolved to obtain information of Graiano, and if she could trace him out to go back to him, by all means, cost what it might. Had Fieramosca been there, she would have told him her determination resolutely on the spot, without the least hesitation; but on rising to

leave the church, she said, "He'll come this evening, and he shall know all."

The chant in the choir being over, the nuns were leaving one by one, and were returning to their cells through a small gate leading to the small court-yard of the cloister.

Ginevra followed them, and entered a portico, which ran around the small garden, and in its neatness shone like a mirror. A wooden shed, supported by four pilasters of stone, protected a well lined with bricks, in the centre of the garden. Through a long corridor she passed into a back court-yard, at the end of which stood a small dwelling, which, not cloistered, was separated from the convent, and where the guests lodgings were built. Ginevra, with the young woman whose life Ettore had saved, occupied two or three rooms of it. These rooms, after the usual manner of monasteries, had no communication with each other, but were entered from a common corridor. When Ginevra entered what was used for a sitting-room in day time, Zoraïs was busy at a frame, and whilst plying the needle, she sang an Arabian air, composed in minor tones, after the usual manner of the songs of southern nations. Ginevra glanced at the work, and sighed; — it was a cape of blue satin embroidered with silver, at which they both worked together, and was destined as a present to Fieramosca. Then she sat on the piazza, which looked over Barletta, and was shaded with vines. The sun was setting behind the hills of Puglia. A few narrow strips of clouds scattered about the sky, glowing with the glare of the sun, resembled golden fish swimming in a sea of fire. Their form was stretched on a long line. and reflected the light on the surface of the waters, rippled here and there by a few

boats of fishermen, sailing with a light eastern wind towards the shore. The woman's gaze was rivetted upon the mole of the opposite harbor, whence a small boat was often seen to start and row towards the island.

On this evening she wishes to see that boat more than ever; she feels as if it were freighted with a most important decision; no matter what the result may be, anything will be better than her present state. But O! those moments thus spent in waiting were long and bitter! She wished Ettore had already come; she wished she had already told him that which she felt so difficult to utter; in case he tarried, or did not come at all, would she feel the same energy and determination on the morrow?

A dark dot, which at first seemed to have scarcely any motion, appeared soon on the water near the shore. After a quarter of an hour it approached nearer and nearer, and increased in size. An unaccustomed eye could hardly see that it was a one oar boat; but Ginevra recognized it, and her heart beat convulsively. By a sudden revulsion, her former ideas and resolutions were changed, and all at once she felt that it would be impossible to tell him what a few moments before she had, or at least thought she had, irrevocably determined to say. She would even have been pleased had the boat tacked about and returned; but alas! on, on it came; it was already near the island; she could hear the splash of the oars plunging into the sea.

"Zorais, here he is!" she said, turning towards the maiden, who scarcely raised her head, but nodded in reply that she had heard the announcement, and fixed her eyes again on the work before her. Ginevra went down to the only place where the island could be approached, and through steps cut in the stone, reached the

shore just when Fieramosca was in the act of laying the oars down, and the bow struck on the rock.

Now the truth was that while the woman felt loath to declare her own resolutions, Fieramosca, who had matters equally as momentous to reveal, possessed no more courage than she did.

Having been so long away from the places where Graiano had been following the fortunes of different armies, he had not heard tidings of him for many a day. Some soldiers from Romagna, either not being well informed or having mistaken the name, had told him that he was dead. Such news would have been too much in accordance with his wishes to be disbelieved, or to induce him to take any steps to verify the fact. We are of opinion that one very seldom wishes to see matters clear, when he is afraid to discover his own evil. Thus, neglecting to employ proper means to find out the truth, he went on from day to day, until his own eyes had at last undeceived him. He went back to Barletta, struggling within himself whether he should tell Ginevra or not. If he did, then they would be separated forever; if not, then he felt as if he was becoming guilty of positive wrong; but, again, how could he hide anything from her, who knew so well how to read his very thoughts?

In this state of perplexity he arrived at the island; his mind was not made up when he met Ginevra, and feeling that he had to decide one way or the other, he resolved to say nothing for the present, saying to himself—we'll see about it.

"I am late to-night," said he, ascending the steps, "but we have had a deal to do, the whole day, and I have great news."

"News!" answered Ginevra, "good or bad?"

"Good; and with God's help they will even be better in a few days."

They had reached the yard before the church; on the very brink where the rock falls perpendicularly into the sea there was a low wall for a parapet or fence, with a few cypress trees, a wooden cross, and all around many rustic seats.

They both sat down in the silvery light of the moon, which had already overcome the red glare of the twilight hours, and Fieramosca began: —

"Ginevra mine, be of good cheer; to-day has been one of glory for Italy and for ourselves; and if God does not refuse to favor a just cause, it will prove the beginning of even greater glory. But now it is necessary to act with manliness; and you must show yourself an example worthy for Italian women to follow."

"Speak," replied the young woman, staring at him, as if she wished to study his countenance, and there to read in advance what was expected from her; "I am a woman, but I have a heart."

"I know it, Ginevra; and I would much quicker doubt the rising of to-morrow's sun, as to entertain the least doubt of you" . . . And then he told her of the challenge, of all the particulars concerning its origin, how they entered the French camp, their return, and of the fight for which they were preparing. Those among my readers who have happened to converse with a woman of noble spirit about generous deeds to be done in behalf of one's country, must remember how they felt their heart quickening in its pulsations, and will know how impassionate must have been Ettore's words, — how fervid with the love of country and aspirations of glory, and how the presence of Ginevra must have increased the fire of his soul.

As Ettore was progressing in the narrative of the events of that day (and his enthusiasm grew with the growing interest of the subject,) the breathing of Ginevra quickened, like a sail swollen by the impulse of strong winds; her bosom was heaving under unmanageable and discordant, but not unworthy feelings; her eyes, seeming to take their temper from the words of the young soldier, glared and sparkled.

Lastly, laying her gentle and white hand on the hilt of Ettore's sword, and raising her face boldly, she said:—

"Would I had thine arm! would I might wield the weapon I can scarcely lift! thou shouldst not go alone; no! and I should not live perhaps to hear the Italians gained the victory, but remained there on the field.... O! I know it, I know it. Thou shalt not return conquered".... Here the thought of the impending danger fell upon her mind, and she could not stem a torrent of tears; they fell upon and bedewed the hand of Fieramosca.

"For whom do you cry? Ginevra, have you any wish that the combat should not take place?"

"No, Ettore, never, never! do not wrong me thus;" and drying her tears she added, with great emotion, "I do not cry . . . see, it is over now . . . it was only a moment." . . . Then with a smile, to which the tearful eyelids added charms, she said:—

"I have aspired to too much bravery; and I have spoken of arms and wars, and then I have shown what I am; I deserve it."

"A woman of your temper can make swords do wonders without touching them; you could turn the world upside down . . . if you knew how. I do not mean you, Ginevra, but those women of Italy, who alas! are not like you."

Zorais was then coming with a basket filled with fruits, cakes, apples, and other refreshments, and she had caught the last words. She carried the basket on her left arm, and in her right she held a decanter of white wine. She wore garments cut in the eastern fashion; but still she betrayed the taste of an uncivilized people in her choice of gaudy colors, and in the fantastic way of arranging them. Her head was dressed after the Oriental costume, with twisted bands, the ends of which fell on her bosom. Her eyebrow was uplifted, her look eagle-like, the color of her countenance rather brown, and, if I may be allowed the expression, slightly gilt, as we see in the races coming from the Caucasus. Her manners were affectionate, with an occasional dash of savage nature; her candor was bold, and without regard to persons.

She stopped to look at Ettore and Ginevra, and said in Italian, with a slight foreign accent,—

"Ettore, you were talking about women, eh! I want to hear what you said."

"Something very different from what women like," answered Ginevra; "It was all about a dance, in which you and I would show to no advantage whatever."

These mysterious words sharpened Zorais' curiosity, and Ettore had to repeat the whole story again.

Zorais appeared thoughtful for a moment, and then said, with a toss of the head,—

"I cannot understand you. So much ire, so much ado because the French say that they do not think much of you! It seems to me they have told you so more impressively, when they came to your land to consume your crops, and dislodge you from your homes. And do not the Spaniards tell you the same, when they come to Italy to do what the French have done? The hart does

not chase the lion out of his den, but the lion both drags the hart out and devours it."

"Zorais, we are not here among barbarians, 'where might makes right.' It would take me too long to tell you what rights France has over the kingdom. Enough to say that the Roman See holds it as a fief, which means, that she is mistress of it. In force of this right, about two hundred years ago, she invested with it Charles of Provenza, and the most Christian king is vested with the title of inheritance."

"It is curious! and who gave it to the Roman See?"

"It was the gift of Robert Guiscard, a French warrior, who had gained possession of it by force of arms."

"Worse and worse! I understand it still less, now. Is not Issaben-Jussef the author of the book which Ginevra gave to me, and which I have read with great attention, I assure you?

"Yes."

"Well; he says that all men are made to the image of God, and ransomed with his blood. I can understand well that there may be Christians, who, by an abuse of their power, take possession of the property and lives of their equals; but I cannot understand how this abuse can be construed into a right to be enjoyed by the children's children."

"I do not know," said Ettore with a smile, "whether you understand nought or too much. But unless you admit this right, what would become of emperors and kings? and without them how could the world go on?"

Zorais shrugged her shoulders and said no more. She spread a white towel, scented with the freshness of the laundry, over one of the seats, and with the refreshments she had brought with her, she prepared a *merenda*.

"That is good," remarked Ettore, in order to divert the thoughts which he read on Ginevra's countenance; "let us have a feast, and enjoy ourselves, while we have the chance, and let the world go as it will."

"The proverb says," Fieramosca continued, "'never speak of the dead while you are at table'; we will not speak even of challenges; let us talk of something cheerful. We shall have feasts very soon. Signor Gonzalo has proclaimed a tourney, a bull fight, theatricals, balls, and grand banquets; a good time is coming."

"What do you mean?—and the French?" Ginevra asked.

"And the French will be at the feasts with us. A truce has been offered, and they will not be such villains as to refuse it. The whole has been set up for the purpose of welcoming the Lady Elvira, the daughter of the great Captain; and since he loves her as the apple of his eye, he intends to have great festivities."

Here there was no end to questions, and Ettore endeavored to satisfy them as best he could. We give some of his answers, leaving the reader to guess the questions.

—"Handsome? most beautiful, if common report be true; her tresses like threads of gold."

—"She will arrive in a few days."

—"She fell sick in Taranto, and now that she is well, she is coming to join her father."

—"I guess he *does* love her. Just think, he has done for her what he never did for himself. Perhaps you have heard that a mutiny took place among the Spanish troops in Taranto because he did not pay them, and Inigo told me that Gonzalo saved his life by miracle, as he was surrounded by the soldiers armed with pikes.

While the General protested loudly that he had no money, one Yciar, a captain of infantry, cried out, with impertinent and shameful words, that his daughter (you will pardon me) would make him get some. Gonzalo did not say a word; the tumult was quelled, and at night quiet reigned again. On the morning they get up, they went to the square, and what do you think they saw? Captain Yciar hanging by the neck from the window of his own rooms. And Gonzalo had not taken any notice of those who had levelled the pikes to his own breast. Judge now, whether he loves her or not."

They followed this train of conversation until it had become late.

"It is time for me to go," Fieramosca remarked; he rose, and accompanied by the ladies moved slowly towards the boat. Ginevra went down with him to the foot of the rock, and Ettore, stepping into the boat, bade good-by to Zorais who had not come down; but she scarcely returned the salute, and withdrew. He did not mind it, and said to Ginevra,—

"She did not hear me. Let me be remembered to her. Good-by. God only knows whether during these days we can see each other. But we'll do the best we can." He plied the oars and left the island. Ginevra regained the platform, and there she remained apparently absorbed in deep thought watching the two lines which, diverging from the prow, marked the wake of the boat over a long surface of the waters. When she could see no more, she entered the house, closed the door, and secured it for the night, with two bolts.

CHAPTER IX.

The fowlers of our own days employ about the same kind of decoys to ensnare birds into their nets as have been used from the beginning; and men also have always been caught by about the same kind of bait.

But the most perilous of all snares is perhaps that which calls into play our own self-love. Don Miguel knew this; and having found what was the lame point in the Podesta, with a few dexterous strokes had him in his power, as we have already seen. When the worthy magistrate had left the antechamber of Gonzalo to look for the servant of the Commune, he revolved the matter in his mind, indulging in a thousand most extraordinary thoughts; was almost beside himself for the joy of having met a man who had promised him such amazing discoveries. It is true, a suspicion at times arose in his mind that perhaps he was a trickster; but as he possessed a most exalted opinion of his own wisdom, he consoled himself with the usual saying of those who spend their lives in being humbugged, — They cannot catch *me*.

He was punctual at the rendezvous at the Tavern of the Sun. But as yet he could not furnish any additional information to Don Miguel, because the servant, who, in his opinion, was so skilful in ferreting things out, had promised a great deal, done little, and found out nothing.

During his supper, his wife and the servant-maid soon observed that there was some mighty thought weighing on his mind, and they stormed him with so many questions that he could not eat a morsel. It was a great wonder that he did not let the whole secret out; for it would be a great deal easier for a man to suppress a cough in a most violent fit, than for him to keep a secret, especially when he thought that its possession increased his reputation. He had already allowed some broken sentences to escape from his lips. Eh! I know it . . . if you only knew it! . . . if I can succeed in a certain affair! . . . . But then he suddenly recovered himself, became frightened at the danger, arose from the table, and peevishly snatching a light went to bed.

That night seemed to him as long as an age. At last, daylight appeared. He dressed himself in a great hurry, and having gone to the square, installed himself in a barber's shop, where Don Miguel had promised to meet him. He took a seat on a bench of that establishment, which was the accustomed morning resort of the notary, the doctor, the apothecary, and two or three others, wiseacres of Barletta. He crossed his legs, and kept continually shaking the foot which was dangling in the air; the left arm was laid against his body, and the hand resting on the opposite side supported in its palm the elbow of the right arm, while the hand attached to this had made a drum of his chin, beating time on it. He kept a sharp look-out in every direction to espy his new friend when he should appear; but as he saw no signs of him, he stared vacantly at the skies. The apothecary, the doctor, and the rest, had repeatedly wished him good morning, but to no purpose; he scarcely noticed them, and they shrank from him out of respect, and whispered

to each other: "What the deuce is in the wind this morning?" Don Litterio left them to their thoughts and kept silent. He had two different expressions of countenance at his command; one most blandly humble for those who were his superiors; another sharp and full of wrinkles for those who were inferior to him; and, as all know, this is the precious boon given by Heaven to every uncommon fool.

Half an hour having been spent in this way, he heard a voice from behind his shoulders, —

"Eccellenza! . . . Signor Podesta; I hope it is no offence to you; . . . but will you accept some of these? . . . they have been gathered while the dew was still on them."

He turned around, and saw the gardener of Sant' Orsola, Gennaro Rafamillo, who offered him a little tithe from a basket of cherries, which he was in the habit of selling, with other fruits, every morning in the square. He knew from experience, that, by offering this tribute, he might afterwards sell as many as he pleased, with impunity, and without much minding the clerk of the market.

"I have something else in my head than thy cherries," answered Don Litterio; however, after taking a survey of the basket, puffing up his cheeks, and letting the collected air escape slowly, with a kind of dignified contempt, he took two or three grape leaves, placed them on the bench to serve for a plate, and laid on them a good heap of the cherries, which he began to eat with an air of condescension.

"They are nice, are they not? Tell the truth! I took some of them to Madam last evening, and she told me that she had never tasted any better."

"And who is this Madam?"

"Madonna Ginevra; she who lives in the guests' rooms; and they say that she is a great gentlewoman of Naples; and she has here, I do not know whether it is a husband or a brother, who serves under Signor Prospero, and he comes to see her almost every day. . . ."

The gardener seemed disposed to talk a great deal, because, in truth, laconism was not his main virtue; but, meanwhile, Don Miguel had arrived; and stepping behind the Podesta, who had not perceived him,—

"Here we are, Signor Podesta," he said, tapping him on the shoulder; "it strikes me that this man can put us on the track; leave him to me. . . ."

And not waiting for an answer, he began to lay snares for Gennaro; and in a very short time he knew from his answers that the lady was the identical Ginevra of whom he was in search. The clew was found; all the rest was as child's play for him. But in order that he might obtain access to the monastery, examine the place, and arrange everything necessary to secure the woman, the coöperation of the valiant Podesta would be eminently useful. It was therefore necessary to inspire him with such confidence as to dispel from his mind any fear as to the rectitude of his intentions.

He took him apart, and said: "We must have a talk about this matter. Wait for me at the Sun Tavern; in the mean time, I will see if this wight can point to me the young man who now and then visits Ginevra."

Don Litterio went to the tavern, while Miguel led the gardener to the guard-house, which was crowded with officers and soldiers, and asked him,—

"Is he among them?"

Gennaro looked awhile, espied Fieramosca, and said: "There he is."

And Don Miguel learned from one of the soldiers that he had found whom he was looking for.

In five minutes after, he was with the Podesta at the tavern, which at that hour was deserted, and sat *vis-a-vis* at a table with two goblets and a decanter of Greek wine before them.

Don Miguel began to speak with a countenance composed, with great modesty: "The discovery is sure. But before we go any further, I have something to tell you. Don Litterio, I have seen a great deal of the world, and I pride myself in knowing honest men at first sight. From the little conversation we have had together, I feel confident to assure you that a better talent than yours is not to be found in the world."

The Podesta's countenance bespoke a reply to the compliment.

"No, no; no thanks. . . . I speak my mind. You do not know me. If I thought differently, I would tell you in plain words, Signor Podesta, (I beg your pardon), that you are an ass. Therefore, if I were an impostor, I should look for somebody else. But, as I pride myself in being as much of an honest man as any in the world, no matter who he may be, I do not recoil from having to do with a person who can see very far. Now, I will tell you all, and I do not intend that you should rely only on my words; you shall have proofs, and then you will be satisfied that you have fallen in with an honest man."

Here he began with a rigmarole of his own; that, in his time, he had been a very great sinner; that, to obtain pardon for his misdeeds, he had travelled to the holy places of Jerusalem; that a hermit on Mount Lebanon had at last shriven him, enjoining on him for his penance, that he should travel the world for seven years,—that,

whenever he met an opportunity of doing good in any way whatever, he should undertake it, even at the peril of his life, being satisfied with an humble condition,—that, to comply with this injunction, he employ for the welfare of mankind all the learning he had obtained in his long travels through Persia, Syria, and Egypt.

"Now," he added, "you can understand why I feel so anxious to free this friend of yours from his love, and from those dangers which might peril the eternal salvation of his soul. Well, then, there is no doubt that that lady Ginevra of Sant' Orsola is the woman in question. Now it must be by your exertions that I shall be introduced to her. You might fear that I am a bad man; and certainly you could not feel warranted in leading into that holy house a man with whom you are unacquainted, and certainly you would be right."

Don Litterio began to move convulsively.

"No. . . . I say it again . . . you are perfectly right; no person carries the testimonial of his honesty on his forehead. And there are so many wicked people about! But I will show to you that, with the help of God, I can extract treasures from the bowels of the earth, break the fury of a gunshot, and perform a thousand most difficult deeds, as you shall see presently, and that the gain will be all on your side, without my partaking of any emolument, satisfying myself with only so much as will support my frugal life; and you will be forced to say: 'This man could be rich and live in ease; instead of that he is poor and leads a life of constant toil; therefore what he says must be true, and certainly he cannot be called a wicked man.' One word more and I have done; it has been the advantage of a great many to have met with me; I might be of use to you also. Think of it and make up your

mind quickly. The penance I have to perform constrains me to travel incessantly, and never to stop in any one place more than one week."

Such an appeal, to which the Podesta listened with open mouth, had the effect to make him feel ashamed that he ever thought evil. However, to show that he was a wise man, he answered that, if he could have some proof of the truth of what Don Miguel had asserted, he would willingly lend him his aid in whatever he could do for him.

Having thus agreed, they parted, with the understanding that Don Miguel would come back very soon, and in the meantime he would ascertain, by some means at his command, whether there was any hidden treasure in the neighborhood.

Having prepared the Podesta in this manner, and perceiving that his plans had turned out well, he resolved not to lose time, but to set the trap at once. He went for Boscherino, and told him that he needed his assistance in the Duke's service. He, who at the bare mention of Valentino's name trembled like an aspen leaf, replied, without even asking in what kind of business he was to engage: "I am ready." Don Miguel, without telling him any more, said to him: "Wait for me outside the gates which lead to the bridge of Sant' Orsola."—The commander of the French troops having agreed to the truce, the soldiers enjoyed the privilege of roaming around the country. Boscherino was punctual at the rendezvous, and so was his guide, who overtook him with a bundle under his arm.

If the reader had any wish to follow these two men, he would see them walking along the shore to the distance of about a mile beyond the bridge which unites the island to the main land, then turning to the left, enter the dense

thickets of a lonely valley, and halt at a little old church, now abandoned, but formerly belonging to a cemetery. But, to avoid the tediousness of travelling over the same road twice, we will postpone our journey thither until night.

About two hours before sundown, Don Miguel made his appearance alone in the public square, approached the Podesta, who was standing at the barber's shop, and whispered to him:

"The place is found. I will be at the door of your house this evening at the hour of three. Do not keep me waiting."

And truly, at the appointed hour Don Miguel was at the door. The Podesta came out, shut the door again as gently as he could, and moving on in silence, with light steps, through streets and lanes, in total darkness—there were no street lamps in those times—they soon were out of town.

On, on they went. They heard the clock strike four from the castle, but the sound was heavy, subdued as it were by the wind which carried it. They had already passed Sant' Orsola, and, ascending from the shore, were approaching the rickety old church. It was a deserted tract, barren, covered only with clumps of dwarf brambles, which became more and more wild as they grew. The path they had followed was soon lost in sand, in which they sank above their ankles; now and then they came across beds of torrents, dry, and full of gravel and of large stones rolled on by the waters; but the two travellers, as they overcame all these obstacles, were in a very different mood of mind.

Don Miguel, accustomed to travel more at night than by daylight, proceeded with a sure step. His companion,

who had not perhaps been out of town after sunset twice in his whole life, felt his breath growing th' c, looked around, and in his own mind cursed the moment he had left his house; and, to tell the truth, he had left it in an evil hour. His imagination became excited, and his heart was a prey to a thousand fears, not the least of which was, that he was alone, away from any house, and in company with a man of whom, after all, he knew absolutely nothing.

Still, from time to time, he endeavored to feign courage, and hummed three or four syllables — he could not muster strength enough for a fifth one; — then he imagined he heard some noise from the thickets; once in the light of a clouded moon he thought he saw the figure of a man lurking in the shadow, but it afterwards proved to be the trunk of a tree or a rock; then again he apprehended he might meet some form or vision of departed spirits, and would mentally repeat some prayer. In this happy frame of mind they emerged from the underwood into open space, in the midst of which the little church stood.

Outside the door were painted skeletons, bolt upright, with mitres, tiaras, and crowns on their heads, and holding in their hands flying scrolls, on which were written Latin verses, such as — *Beati mortui qui in Domino moriuntur*, or *Miseremini mei*, etc.; and although in the moonlight the letters could scarcely be read, still the forms of those figures which were plainly visible produced a great impression. Don Miguel took out a lantern, and was about stepping over the threshold. The Podesta had stopped a few paces behind, and understanding the intention of his companion, let the exclamation "here!" escape from his lips in a tone so plaintive and so full of

terror, that the thin and livid lips of Don Miguel curled with a smile.

"It befits us now to have a stout heart, Signor Podesta, because in such places as these nothing is obtained by fear; on the contrary, fear might prove the source of serious evils. Your friend is at work in the name of God, and to prove to you that in that name only he controls the souls of the departed, let us begin with prayer."

He knelt down, and began to run through the *Miserere*, and the *Dies Iræ*, to which Don Litterio endeavored to answer as well as he could, vowing in his own heart, that if he came out of the adventure alive, he would keep a strict fast on the eve of All-Souls. When they had done praying they arose. The shattered and rotten door, which scarcely kept together on the rusty hinges, yielded, and almost fell to the floor at a kick from Don Miguel's foot. In advancing, their clothes were torn by the tangled briars which encumbered the entrance.

Bones of the dead were scattered all over the floor. A bier crumbling to pieces and reduced to dust by the wood-worms, together with some spades, huddled together in a corner, and used God alone knows when, were the only furniture in the place. Hundreds of bats, startled by the light carried by the intruders, flew around in great confusion, with shrieks, flapping their wings against the walls, and at last took refuge in a Gothic steeple, which arose at the side of the altar.

The place, the solitude, and the late hour, if they were not such circumstances as to strike with terror, were undoubtedly calculated to inspire any one with profound solemnity; and the unfortunate Don Litterio, who when the sun was high above the horizon had thought of the moment without any fear, now when he found himself in

the situation, realized most distinctly the difference between words and deeds.

He was looking at the bones under his feet, at the walls green with dampness, and in different places still covered with old paintings; and there he stood, upright, in the centre, with his hands clasped together, waiting for the end of this infernal mystery.

Don Miguel placed on the floor a little bundle he had carried with him. He took out a conjuring book, and having put on a black stole, marked all over with cabalistic characters, began with a rod to mark a circle, accompanying the action with a thousand mummeries. He marked an entrance in the circle, and told the Podesta to pass through it with the left foot foremost. He then took up the pentacle in his hand, and began to mutter words in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, now calling on hundreds of demons by virtue of the Eternal, now raising and again lowering the tones of his voice, and at times making pauses, during which the echoes of his words died away, rumbling through the vault. Some bat would occasionally dash by the cheeks of Don Litterio, who stood there shrinking and shaking, the very image of despair. He feared lest the originals of those pictures on the walls outside might, at any moment, come out of their graves, and he prayed to God in good earnest to have mercy on him, and to render fruitless the incantations of his terrible companion.

As he was there on his knees recommending himself to God, he felt a tap on the shoulder; he raised his eyes and saw a lurid light shining from the corner under the steeple, and a human form, wrapped in a winding-sheet, such as dead bodies are covered with, slowly emerging from a hole.

The apparition stood motionless, and we need not say how the Mayor remained. Don Miguel stooped down to his ear, and said to him:

"Hallo! have courage; now is the moment to show yourself a man of stout heart; quick, be up, ask what you wish." But to no avail; the Podesta could neither move, nor answer, nor even breathe.

Don Miguel then spoke a few words of an unknown tongue to the apparition, which made no answer, but slowly raised its arm, pointing to a tomb the stone of which had already been half removed.

"Do you understand? He means that if we dig there we shall find as many florins as will satisfy us."

But the wretch seemed not to hear. Seeing that there was no hope of rousing him, Don Miguel went to the tomb, and very easily let himself down. In a little while he came out with an earthern vessel half covered with dirt, and approaching the spot to which the Podesta was rivetted, emptied before him a large sum of golden coins, or such as at least appeared to be gold, which fell on the ground without having any virtue to bring the breath back to him who had exposed himself to so much hardship to obtain them.

The last coin had scarcely fallen on the heap, when the door was burst open and fell with a crash on the floor, and in bolted fifteen or twenty ribald fellows armed with pikes and partisans. To point their weapons at the breasts and throats of the two men was the work of an instant.

Don Miguel had scarcely time to grasp with his hand the hilt of his sword, when, feeling four or five blades ripping his cape and pricking his skin, he was obliged to keep still, otherwise he would have been dispatched.

The Podesta was already so much frightened, that this new occurrence made no impression whatever on him. There he remained with his eyes distorted, his head sunk between his shoulders, his hands clasped, and with an involuntary movement, pressing together those fingers of his, long and emaciated, so violently, that the nails entered the skin, and said with a voice half choked: "Kill me not, I am in mortal sin." *

The lantern had been upturned in the confusion, and threw its light upon that strange company, which, (having for a moment remained still, to make sure that the two prisoners could not and would not defend themselves,) appeared composed of that sort of infamous outlaws, who in those times were called *adventurers*. We now call them assassins, and in fact they were nothing else in that age; but that name was given then, to designate those bands composed for the most part of soldiers who had deserted their standards to unite under one chief, and who pillaged the country around, doing as much evil as they had opportunity.

Some were protected with cuirasses, some had on headpieces of iron, others were armed with poniards or knives; many wore hats in the shape of cones, over which were seen flying plumes or ribbons. Many wore sandals of goat-skin, instead of shoes, to be better enabled to climb mountains.

We need not portray their faces. Seen by the light of that lantern, with beards and moustaches of great length, unkempt and uncombed, they looked like so many devils let loose.

* Even at the present day the brigands in the Campagna Romana make an appeal like this to escape death at the hands of those whom they have attacked on the highways. The author remembers an assassin who, by an appeal of this kind, saved himself from being killed.

One among them, dashing on the floor the partisan he held at the throat of the Podesta, snatched from him and his companion the arms they had at their sides, and shook their garments to see whether they had any more weapons concealed on their persons.

During the melee, the apparition, throwing away the sheet, had become a man of this world again, and feeling that there was no time to lose, had climbed up the steeple, and sitting on a joist, holding himself fast by some projecting stones, was on the alert waiting for a propitious moment to make his escape; and thus concealed in the dark, he was able to watch the proceedings of that night of horrors.

Meantime, the chief of those outlaws, a youth of about seventeen, but of fearful countenance, of robust frame, having a scar which ran the whole length of his forehead and raised the eyebrows an inch higher, swung such a kick into the sides of the Podesta, in order to make him rise, that he gave a moan like one who had lost the power of speech. No better specific could be adopted to cure him of his astonishment; he rose, not waiting for a second dose, and being drawn to one side with Don Miguel, they were tied up and placed under guard of some of the band, while the others were taking up and counting the gold by the light of the lantern. After doing this, they placed their booty in a leathern pouch, which the chieftain carried at his belt, and all went out, taking their prisoners in the midst, and warning them, in such courteous terms as only themselves could command, that they should walk fast if they wished not to taste the points of their daggers.

After having proceeded half a mile up the hill, they halted at a place where there was no trace whatever of any path, and blindfolded both their captives.

The fright had made the Podesta recover his voice, and he begged for mercy like a child; the outlaws made merry at his expense, but did not hurt him.

But Don Miguel, who, during that respite, thought of the worst that might happen, muttered between his teeth: "By ——, we have got it!" — He attempted to enter into some treaty, in order to be released; but as he uttered the first word, a blow from a fist which made him swallow a couple of his teeth, hushed his voice. As he could neither see nor talk, he listened intently. He heard the thieves talking of dividing the money; they spoke also of a ransom, and debated among themselves which of the two would bring more money. From the discordant accents, which seemed to belong to various dialects, all Italian however, he took notice of one which had a foreign sound, and he took it for German; but in the midst of his observations, he felt himself lifted up by many arms, and then placed on the shoulders of two men, who seemed to go in a different direction from the company, but whither he could not divine.

They travelled more than an hour, with many halts, during which the prisoners were thrown down not very gently, while the carriers rested. Don Miguel began greatly to dislike the game; he had great horror, very natural even to a man of courage, of being butchered like a dog by those ruffians; and it was no joke to be tied up so tightly, and to be carried on the backs of those soldiers, his limbs resting on the pointed angles of their armor.

At last they came to a standstill. A heavy door was heard to open. They entered, and the door closed again on its hinges behind their backs. Here the shackles

were taken from Don Miguel, the bandage from his eyes, and he found himself in a room, into which a little light of the moon found its way through a fissure. In a corner there was a door, low and heavy, well guarded with bolts. It was opened, and a voice gave order to Don Miguel to go in. He stooped to enter, and while he stepped forward, feeling with his foot whether there were steps, a thrust from the butt of a pike behind, sent him sooner than he wished to the bottom of the narrow stairs, and with so much hurry that he could not reckon with himself as to the number of steps he had descended. A heavy bolt which was drawn across the door with a grating noise, convinced Don Miguel that he would have no chance of making his escape by the way he had entered.

The place was entirely dark. He first felt of his mouth, which ached exceedingly from the blow he had received; his hands were moist, (of course he knew it was blood,) and he discovered that from that day forward he would have to depend not on thirty-two, but only on thirty teeth.

"Had the devil done his duty, and choked thee along with thy father, these would not have been sown in the woods." Such was the remark he made thinking of him who had put him up to that undertaking.

Still he endeavored to encourage himself, and groping about the place with outstretched arms, he tried to find out what kind of a place he was in. He perceived that a little light entered from a hole high up; and he thought he heard the sea dashing against the exterior wall. With his feet he felt there was some straw in a corner; he threw himself down upon it, and disposed himself to await the issue of his adventures.

CHAPTER X.

THE reader needs not to be told that it was the *capo-squadra* Boscherino who had personated the phantom under the steeple.

But we must inform him how it happened that a band of adventurers was ready at hand to interrupt the plans of Don Miguel. It happened thus:

Don Litterio had a handsome and buxom servant maid, whose presence in the family had made people entertain serious doubts about the integrity of his connubial faith. The girl had humored the quinquagenarian advances of the master, but had not been proof against the addresses of a groom who lived in the house. Through the channel of this love the secret of the master's going that night to dig a treasure, was communicated to the groom.

He had friends among the men of the band of Pietraccio — this was the name of the chief outlaw, — and he imparted to them the communication on such terms that if the treasure were found, he should have part of it, instead of its going wholly into the master's pockets.

It now becomes necessary, before we join company with Don Miguel again, to give to the reader an account of the places in which the scenes, which we are about to relate, were enacted.

At the head of the bridge, which led to the little island

of Sant' Orsola, stood a tower, square, massive, and very much like that seen by travellers on Ponte Nomentano as they go from Rome to Sabina. The issue from the bridge was guarded by a heavy gate, a portcullis which was let down as the occasion might require, and a drawbridge. A narrow winding stair led the way to two stories above in which a commander and his soldiers were lodged, and on the top there was a terrace, fringed with merlons, from amidst which the muzzles of two falconets were seen protruding.

The Abbess of the Monastery, invested with baronial rights, kept there a company of eighty men on foot, pikes and arquebuses, over whom commanded one Martin Schwarzenbach, a German, an adventurer, who found it better for his interest to lead a lazy life at that post, well paid and better fed, than to go about periling his life in battles and campaigns, in which his experience had taught him that oftentimes the pleasure of ill using and robbing people had been marred by a bullet from an arquebuse, or by the blade of a partisan. He had three ruling passions: to keep aloof from blows, to steal, and to drink as much wine of Puglia, as could be poured into his belly, which in capacity was not very unlike a barrel.

You might have read in his countenance these habits of his life; the first two in a pair of eyes equally full of covetousness and cowardice; the latter in a flaming vermilion color, which, while the rest of his face was of a livid paleness, was concentrated entirely in his nose and cheeks. His beard was thin, and in color like that of a goat, the lips of a purple hue, and his body seemed built for the fatigue of a soldier's life, had not his debauched habits broken down at the age of forty years a frame that might have lasted to that of seventy.

All the duties of this man's life consisted in closing the gate at night. There was nothing to fear from the troops then at war in the neighborhood; they had no hostile intentions against the Monastery. The bands of outlaws who overran the country would not have dared to attack a strong tower guarded by eighty men and two falconets. But there was also another reason why Martin Schwarzenbach should not fear any interruption in his slumbers, although he was surrounded by such swarms of ruffians. The Abbess had hired him to guard the monastery; but he did not believe that he was thereby bound to be the guardian and protector of the ducats, the florins, goods, and chattels of the people living in the neighborhood, or of the property of those who happened to travel through it. However, as he could not with any decency go and dive into the pockets of the people, he had (to use a modern phrase) taken a share in the stock managed by Petraccio, and lent him aid, detailing some of his men to help him, as the occasion might require. He would secrete money, goods, and even persons, whenever there was a prospect of rich ransom.

And these operations were carried on so cautiously that the sufferers would lay charges on any one but Martin, who was only looked upon as the greatest toper of the land.

Don Miguel had now fallen into this man's clutches. He had been raking his brains the whole night to guess what place he was in, but could not come to any satisfactory conclusion. At the first break of day he had heard the guns from the rock of Barletta fire three times, as was the custom every morning; he endeavored to climb up to the loop-hole, through which a little light entered into the dungeon, but the spiracle was so much

encumbered with ivy that only a small tract of the waters could be seen. In a little while he saw the gardener of Sant' Orsola rowing a small boat with a load of vegetables; then he felt sure that he was in the dungeons of the tower guarding the entrance to the Monastery.

Just as he had let himself down from his uncomfortable position, the prison-door was opened, and two of the ruffians on guard at the tower ordered him out, to appear before the Captain.

That worthy was half roused from his sleep, and being still undressed, sat on the side of a couch with a desk before him, encumbered with the remnants of a late carousal. There was a rack running all along the wall on which were hung pikes, cross-bows, arquebuses, iron coats-of-mail, and arms of various kinds. He looked at Don Miguel as he entered, squinting his eyes as if he found hard work to uplift the flabby and wrinkled eyelids; and beating time on the floor with the heel of one of his shoes, he said to him,—

"Thou must know, Sir Thou, as I don't know thy name, that whoever spends a night at my inn must pay a hundred golden florins, of ten livres each, of the alloy of the mint of Florence, or of San Marco, just as he pleases. Otherwise a rope with a stone at his neck, and a bath in the sea, will take him his way scot-free. Which dost thou prefer?"

"What will be the best for me will not prove the same to thee;" was the dignified reply of Don Miguel. "Yesterday evening, you took two of us prisoners, but we were not alone in the small chapel. There was some one whom you have not seen; but he has seen thy party and he knows thee, and thy ruffian deeds are known in Barletta by this hour; and in a short time, thou, not I,

will have to bathe in the sea, unless, however, thou dost know how to prevent three or four hundred Catalans or Stradiotti from breaking down the gate of this tower, or unless thou canst prevail on them to hang thee from one of yon merlons, instead of wedding thee to the water, — which, as I perceive, thou wouldst taste for the first time in thy life."

The last idea was suggested to him at the sight of a quarter cask of wine, which was kept by the German at the head of his bed, in place of cross or relics.

A reply given with so much arrogance, raised the anger of the constable, who, pulling his cap over his eyes, said,—

"If thou thinkest that thou art dealing with a boy, and can frighten me with thy bravadoes, I will tell thee, at first, that I believe thee not, and then even were thy Albanians, or whatever the devil thou dost call them, to come, I am in a position not to fear them, or the water, or the merlons. . . . And I don't know what keeps me from having thee hooked by the throat. But I prefer the sound of thy florins, rather than to let the crows come and pick at thy eyes. Then let us come to it and bestir; there are the implements for writing; order the cash to be paid, and then go where thy ill luck will carry thee."

Don Miguel did not appear to be in a hurry to reply, but he looked at the man with the attitude of one, who fearing naught for himself, was still in doubt whether he should take the matter as a joke or in earnest. The Captain began to show anger, and seemed to be inclined to carry out his threats, but at last Don Miguel replied:—

"Constable, thou likest florins, and wine pleases thee

also; thou must needs be a boon companion. Of course, that is always the case with a good soldier; mischievous, a glutton, and without devotion. But what the devil makes you so cross? Listen, we must be good friends. True, thou shouldst be made to pay for the night thou hast given me; and were it not . . . well, I pardon thee, and in its stead I will put thee in the way of making money." Here he turned towards the two men, who had led him in, and held him still by the arms. "Say, my lads, have you nothing to do? You keep here at my shoulders like the two thieves by our Lord! Go, my boy," he added, disentangling himself from one of them, and slapping him playfully on the cheek; then ridding himself of the other in the same way: "Go, begone thou also, there is no need of thee; I can stand by myself. Meanwhile go and keep a look-out on the Barletta road, see if any body is coming. It takes so long to arrange a little business with this lord of yours! You see yourselves I have no arms about me, and I do not mean to swallow him with an empty stomach; marry, it would take a stomach far worse than yours."

The soldiers were puzzled at so great assurance, as much as Martino was, and they looked up to him to read his thoughts about the matter. He nodded with his head, and the soldiers left. But when he found himself alone with Don Miguel, he took the precaution of standing up, and he kept his sword within reach.

"Conestabile! thou hast asked a hundred florins in ransom for my person; I did not think I should be valued at so low a rate; and to teach thee how to value the like of me, I offer thee two hundred!" The Teuton opened his eyes wide, and his mouth was watering. "Yes, two hundred, and this would be the least. . . . Hadst thou the

appearance of a man on whom I could rely for judgment and fidelity, I would put thee in the way to strike a good blow, eh! But it is out of the question; it needs a man quick to act, of ready words, silent in the proper time, — in a word, not a man with a parsnip face and those two dead eyes of thine, which have as much meaning as mush seasoned with oil."

Martin thought he was dreaming as he listened to words of so much impertinence, and he indulged in a thousand suspicions that perhaps he had in his power a prince or some great man in disguise; but he could not rest on any thought, and unable to bear being made so little of, in his own court, answered, —

"But in the name of God, or the Devil's — may he carry you! — who are you? what do you want? Speak, because I am tired, and I am no man's fool."

"Easy, easy, and have good manners, because if I get angry, I'll say no more, and it will be the worse for you. Know then . . ."

A soldier entered, and interrupted Don Miguel, saying, —

"Conestabile! there is dust rising on the road from Barletta; they appear to be mounted men; at least so says Sandro, who can see the farthest of all."

The German was roused, looked at the prisoner, who smiled maliciously, and remarked, —

"There! I have sold you. But have no fear. Be on the alert! and it will end well. Go," he added to the soldier; "and if there is any news, let us know it. Then, as I was telling you, know that there is a person in yon monastery, who would much rather be out in the world enjoying herself, than be forever stumbling against crosses and blessed candles; I need not mention to you by whom

she is kept there. We must go to work in a careful way. If then, some night or other, a boat should approach these shores with five or six men for the purpose of setting her free, and the Conestabile should hear some dogs bark, and some slender voice cry for mercy, (thou knowest well that women always cry two hours before they are touched,) let him not be disturbed, let him imagine it was a dream, turn over the other side, and keep on snoring; and this little service will bring to him, as if rained from the skies, five hundred new florins from the mint of San Marco, or from that of the lily, just as he likes: and morever it might give him a commission far better than the one he has now from these devotees." Such an offer placed poor Martin in great danger of losing the only good quality he had mixed with so much badness, namely, that of being faithful to those who paid him. But that law by which nothing in this world can be perfectly good and nothing totally bad, saved him from a total wreck, and he made a reply with the intention of showing resentment; but his words betrayed disappointment rather than anger:—

"Martin Schwarzenbach has held commissions in Milan, Venice, and from the Emperor, and never has he betrayed his employers. The Abbess of Sant' Orsola has paid him in full to the last day of December 1503. If your honor is some . . . how do I know? . . . some *Signore* . . . or if you are making levies for some Italian prince, and you wish to hire me, well, let us talk about it; I will parade my company in your presence; they are thirty muskets and fifty pikes, and all of the age from twenty to forty; and as regards the quality of the armor, you would not miss the tongue of a buckle. If we can agree on terms, we will be ready for you on the 1st of

January 1504, if you wish it, and will storm the Monastery and carry them all off, even to the cook. But before that time, as long as I have a charge of powder, or the blade of a stiletto, no person will harm one hair on the head of the nuns or of the last lay-sister."

"And can you, Sir Martin, believe for a moment that I do not know what the duties of a man of your station in life are? Can you believe that I would dare to make such an infamous proposition to you? You don't know me. The person of whom I speak is neither nun nor lay-sister, and she is just as much connected with the monastery as the barrel which you keep there at your nose. God bless your soul! you must be a clever man indeed, when you know that only a fool will run when he can as well walk at his ease; and when you can slumber away snugly indoors with half a goblet of Greek wine, you must be crazy to prefer sleeping in the open air and with a cold stomach; and when it falls in your way to pocket five hundred florins without labor, with the good will of others, and with no offence to God, you must think that such good chances will not be as plenty as berries. . . . Well, if there is any sense left in you, we can arrange matters; make up your mind, because these horsemen will be here before long."

Like most honest men, Martin could compromise with his virtue; so he replied: —

"If there is no question of nuns, then it is quite another affair."

Don Miguel was debating in his own mind whether he should then reveal the name of the woman whom he wished to abduct; but while there was a lull in their conversation, they were interrupted by an altercation going on at the door of the room, between two soldiers and an old woman.

"The devil choke thee, accursed hunchback; no matter who is inside, it is no business of thine; the *Conestabile* has other affairs to attend to than to listen to thee."

Such was the loud reply made by one of the soldiers to an old woman, whom he endeavored to keep away from the door; she was of small size, very much crooked, and had two eyes of the color of mother-of-pearl set in scarlet. She was half inside the door; but the soldier had still hold of her at that point where the neck joins with the shoulders, and pulled the skin so that her mouth had become distorted on one side the length of three inches. The old wench scratched the soldier's hand with her fingers which seemed made of steel, and thereupon he let go his hold so suddenly that she fell like a released spring on Don Miguel, on whom she upheld herself, and thus was saved from a blow aimed at her back by the soldier's fist, and it was by good luck alone that she escaped it.

"Take that, thou bastard," she said, turning to the soldier, who sucking the blood from the scratch she had inflicted upon his hand, looked at her as a mastiff does at a cat who has scarred its nose. "Take that; and if you try it again, you shall fare worse."

"And thou, ugly witch, try it again when I'm on guard . . . *Sandro mio*, bless thy soul;"—(these words he uttered, pursing the under lip over the upper one, mimicking the old woman,) "let me enter the monastery . . . only to say one word to the sister at the gate, to give a little lint for *Scannaprete* who is wounded, and a little powder for Paciocco, who is taken with the fever . . . a little cancer" (here he resumed his natural tone of voice) "that might strangle thee! Try it again, try it, and see how thou wilt like it. May they tear my tongue

from the very roots, as Valenza, God bless him! had them uprooted from thy ribald father's throat, if I do not dispatch thee with a benison thou so fully deservest, thou witch of St. John's night."

The beldam had plenty of matter for a reply, and therefore preferred not to violate one of the fundamental rules of the feminine code, which prescribes that women should ever be the last to speak, but she was hurried on by matters of great importance, so she turned her back on Sandro with an air of scorn which can better be imagined than described.

"If you don't take the matter in hand," she said, addressing the *conestabile*, "it will be a queer dance; all hell was in the woods last night. The men who were out returned at one hour before daylight. They had with them that ugly Christian, who was captured yesterday evening . . . Virgin! he looked as if he had been dead these three days. But he was not kept long in fear. Pietraccio has ripped him open as he would a young kid."

"What?" exclaimed Martin and Don Miguel, both speaking at one time; "have they killed the Podesta? why? where? how? . . ."

"What can I tell you? My blessed Virgin! Pietraccio was trying to make him understand that he would have to pay I cannot say how many ducats for his ransom; and you know very well no one can make himself understood without a tongue. The man stood there with his eyes set, glassy; and he had the appearance of a man more dead than alive. The master then wrote on a paper what he wanted, and gave it to him to read. Worse than ever. He looked like St. Rochus's statue in the Belfiore Chapel. Then Pietraccio gave him three or

four slaps on the face, and they had a weight, I assure you! No use, not the least. At last he grew mad . . and you know what he is when he is mad! . . . Down he came upon him with uplifted hand, and plunged the hanger here in the pit of the stomach. There is no need of telling it; you know how he can work with a knife; he will put to shame even older hands. But what can you do? he is a bad boy! I told his mother so, often! — 'Ghita! that boy is growing up too ready with his hand;' but we cannot make him change his ways."

These particulars, and the style of rendering them, made the two listeners start, although from different motives, and they could make no reply.

The old woman went on: "Now I will tell you the rest, and then I will go; I have been on my feet since yesterday. We were lying down to take an hour's rest; and lo! Cocco d'Oro comes running out of breath: 'Up, quick, quick, the sheriff, a band of policemen!' . . . We start; what do you think? They were already under Malagrotta, and they were advancing post-haste, and we running for dear life up the mountain. At this moment our people are all shut up in the cave of Focognano, without a morsel of bread or a drop of water; and there are about two hundred between soldiers and bailiffs scouring the woods. May God forbid our men should get *la mancia prima delle feste.** Up with you, make haste, try to remedy the evil . . . they must have found the body of the Podesta . . . Holy Virgin! what a ruin is coming upon

* We are at a loss how to render this Italian proverb, which alludes to the custom prevailing in Italy with people to call on those on whom they depend, or by whom they are employed, at Christmas and Easter, to offer the compliments of the season, and to receive the present of some money. Literally: *Their Christmas gift before Christmas arrives.*

us! and — Ghita says — do not forget that there is nothing up there to whet their teeth with; so send up some as soon as you can."

Uttering all this in one breath, she saw on the table the remnants of the supper, and gathering them up with great haste, without asking permission, filled her apron with bread, pieces of meat, and fruits; the wine left on the table she emptied into a gourd she carried at her side, drank what she could not pour in there, and wiping her mouth with the back of her hand, turned around, gave a push to Sandro to clear her way, and without even saying "by your leave, sirs," went out.

Martin had a great deal more business on hand, than his head was able to attend to. With one hand at his beard, and the other behind his back, he paced the room up and down, shaking his head and puffing. The fact that Don Miguel had foreseen with so much certainty the sudden start of the troops from Barletta, made Martin have faith in him, and he began to think that the captive was actually the great man he passed himself for.

He thought that before all it would be necessary to come to terms with Don Miguel, lest he should betray him when those who were in search of the murderers of the Podesta appeared at the tower. Thus, having thrown aside his haughtiness, and with expressions which sounded very much like recommending himself, he told the stranger to look upon him as one devotedly at his service, promising that he would lend him aid in everything he might wish.

Scarcely had this been agreed upon, when they heard the tramp of many horses, just entering the bridge; and a clear voice, sounding like a trumpet, called out several times: "*Conestabile Schwarzenbach!*" He descended,

and was met by Fieramosca and Fanfulla da Lodi, at the head of a troop of horsemen.

The reader remembers, perhaps, that the latter had been selected for one of the chosen champions of the Italian army.

A more desperate soul than his could not be picked out of all the armed bodies then in Italy. He would expose his life to any peril for the most frivolous cause, and often even without any cause at all. With a head devoid of all thought, he gave his attention to pleasure, and used his hands when necessary. He was as nimble as a leopard, the tissue of his nerves perfect, his body supple and well compacted; and it seemed as if nature, knowing that it was to be the abode of a soul endowed with a boldness bordering on insanity, had taken pains to mould it so that it might be proof against the most perilous adventures. He was the son of a man, who had been in the pay of Girolamo Riano, had been brought up amid the din of arms from his infancy, and had been in the service of all the Italian States; because, either for quarrelling, or for misdemeanor, or often through his own inconstancy, he was forever in quest of new masters. He had been lately in the service of the Florentines, and he had fled their banners for the reason we are going to state.

When at the siege of Pisa, the storming of the city was attempted, if Paolo Vitelli, captain of the Florentine troops, had not ordered a retreat, and checked his soldiers, who were full of ardor, from pursuing the advantage of the first assault, Pisa would have certainly fallen that day. Vitelli was afterward summoned before a court, indicted for treason, and, as every one knows, condemned to death. Fanfulla, who was always ahead

in every undertaking, had succeeded in climbing up a ladder, and in taking hold of one of the merlons; there, whirling around his sword and clearing the way, he had already gained the rampart, and there he showered around such thrusts and passes and stabs and desperate blows, that the rest might have followed him with comparative ease.

At this moment, the retreat was sounded, and he was left alone. He could not brook the idea of retreating; but at last he came down, mad with fury, yelling with rage, under a pelting storm of arrows, stones, and shots, — none of which, however, harmed him in the least; and he reëntered the camp safe and sound, running like a madman, and insulting every one he met in his way. In the Captain's tent the Florentine Commissioners were deliberating in council with Vitelli. Fanfulla dashed into their midst, and, in a tower of rage, called them traitors; and with a club which he had picked up on the way, he began to hail upon them blows from his stick, from his hands, from his toes; pushing them; thrusting them; knocking them down; giving no quarters; listening to no entreaties; caring not how, where, and whom he hit. And what with the great power of his arm, and the suddenness of the attack, he made such a rout among them, that they found themselves on the floor in an indescribable uproar before they could even think who the author of the attack might be.

After an exploit of this sort, he jumped on a horse, — without taking leave, as we may well imagine, — and was already at a good distance from the camp, when the chieftains, having got on their feet again, began to think of arresting him.

Having thus deserted the Florentines, he had hired

himself to Signor Prospero Colonna, and now he was quartered in Barletta, with the rest of the company.

Boscherino had brought word to Barletta that the Podesta had been captured by outlaws; but he took pains to convey the news in such a way that no suspicion should fall upon him. The sheriff, with a *posse* of his men, started for the mountain. Fieramosca, Fanfulla, and a few horsemen had followed them; and, sending the bailiffs forward, had halted to guard the avenue issuing from the woods where the little church stood.

The sheriff brought to them two prisoners, whom they had secured with great difficulty; and the party on horseback led them to the tower guarded by Martin Schwarzenbach.

When the Conestabile had reached the gate, those two wretches stood in the midst of the soldiers waiting for the prison to be opened. One of them was the leader Pietraccio, a ferocious youth, with limbs and countenance of savage mould, with an unkempt profusion of reddish hair falling over his eyes, his arms bare, still stained with the blood of the Podesta, and pinioned over the breast with cords that penetrated the flesh; he had a downcast look, very much like a wolf that has been caught in a trap. The other prisoner was a woman, tall, and of handsome form; but hardship, a life of crime, and despair had reduced her to such a condition, that she appeared a great deal older than she was in reality. In the scuffle with the *gensdarmes* she had received a cut on the head, and had been brought hither on the arms of two soldiers. They laid her down on the flags of the entrance, and the shock she then received exasperated the wound, made her open her eyes, and give a deep groan, while the blood issuing from the cut ensanguined her face and breast. The dun-

geon lately occupied by Don Miguel was opened, and both the woman and Pietraccio were thrown into it, without even untying their arms.

The soldiers, having got rid of these two, returned to the woods to secure other prisoners, if there were any more. Fanfulla went up stairs to the room of the Conestabile, and Ettore improved those few moments to visit the guests' lodgings at the Monastery.

The two women were surprised to see him at that unusual hour; but after the first greeting he informed them of the occasion that had brought him there. As he was repeating to them the particulars of the chase given to the robbers, he told them that a woman had been taken with their leader, and that, while offering resistance at the entrance of the cave where they had taken refuge, she had wounded several of the *gensdarmes*, but at last had been felled by a blow on the head from a rapier.

Ginevra, affected at the sadness of the event, resolved to go to their assistance. She rose, and selecting what she thought would be needed from a chest in which she kept a quantity of powders and liniments, and which, as we have seen, had been used on several occasions for the service of those same assassins, she requested Fieramosca to obtain from the Conestabile the key of the prison.

He started, and ascending through the winding stairs to Martin's room, he heard a dragging of feet within it, the cause of which he could not imagine. He pushed the door which stood ajar and saw Fanfulla in the centre of the apartment handling a long sword, which he had taken down from the racks, and playing with it as if with a walking cane. He parried imaginary blows, whirled it around, cutting a thousand figures in the air; he aimed

thrusts and sabre-cuts in rapid succession, so that the weapon had only the appearance of a mist; he could not have done less were he to defend himself against a whole host. Ettore, with one foot already inside, fell back on the other to avoid being struck, and looked with a smiling countenance on the mad joust which the other carried on, believing himself unobserved. It was evident, that for the misfortune of the host the blows which now were aimed at the air had not been all harmless. Either from malice, or through mistake, one of them had put an end to the requisitions of the half cask which was lying under the bed, split in two like a nut; and the liquor was flowing towards the more depressed parts of the floor.

"The must is taken out of the vat late this year," said Fieramosca at last, with a laugh; and Fanfulla, turning around at the sound of the voice, let his long sword fall to the floor, threw himself on the bed on his back roaring with laughter, and performed so many antics, that he actually looked as if he had turned insane.

"What mischief hast thou been doing, thou raving madman? look there! look! we have been here only half an hour, and thou hast done more evil than a dozen Catalans would in a whole week. . . . And, Martin? where is he?"

Fanfulla became quiet at last, and replied: —

"He was here a while ago; and he bragged that none but Swiss and Germans knew how to handle a long sword. I told him that he was right, and begged of him to give me a few lessons, and as I tried my best at it, I happened to cut a notch in the barrel, — I'll be hanged if I did it on purpose! — and he became mad in earnest. See what a beast of a man he is! . . . he cannot make any allowance! and still he knew well

that we Italian wretches do not know how to handle a sword! To make the story short, we had some very ugly words between us, and he left scolding and swearing. What wouldst thou have done? Not caring to carry on a fight with a fencer of his quality, I wished him a *cancker* * in the true Lombardy fashion, and said to him: If you'll condescend to come out to the field in front of the tower, I will make a notch in your German noddle, that will prove to you that the cut in the barrel was by mere accident."

"And what did he reply?"

"That I should begone, that he was sick of me."

To utter these words, and to roll over and over on the bed, scattering everything in all directions, was the work of an instant. The Captain, not feeling disposed to meddle any more with that devil of a man, and on the other hand, feeling very sore for the loss of his wine, gave vent to his anger in German curses, and hid himself in a rickety old room on the second story, where Don Miguel had ensconced himself. From that place of security he heard Fanfulla giving his version of the story, and now and then he let a valve open for the outpouring of his indignation in some villainous expressions, to which Fanfulla responded in tune, introducing his narrative by way of parenthesis.

Fieramosca, who naturally abhorred such vulgar jokes, interfered, and with much ado succeeded at last in reconciling them. Martin came down, Fanfulla went his way in a glee, and even Ettore could scarcely refrain from laughing, to see the German eyeing the two halves of his barrel, with the look of a miser who opens his coffer and finds it empty. At last, Ettore made known that

* Lombardian for *cancer*.

Ginevra wished to visit the prison, and with courteous words requested that she might be admitted to it.

Meantime the Conestabile had set up again the two halves of his cask, and using a piece of cloth in place of a sponge, he began soaking it in the wine, and then squeezing the liquor with great care into those receptacles, in order to save at least the remnants of his defeat. When he had heard the request of Ginevra, he grumbled and grunted: —

"There! assassins meet friends ready to give them succor, and a poor fellow who minds his own business, and does not even hurt the bread he eats, falls in with mad people who sack his house."

"My dear Sir Martin, you are certainly right; but you see I have nothing to do with it."

"Now I suppose it is *my* fault. Did I go forth to beg of them to come and have a merry time in my quarters?"

Fieramosca kept urging his request.

"Well, well, come within half an hour, and I'll let you into the prison . . . that you may all perish therein. . . ." He muttered these last words between his teeth; but Fieramosca was already half way down, and could not hear him.

CHAPTER XI.

Martin and Don Miguel saw that the capture of Pietraccio and of his mother might entail serious consequences upon the one, and interfere with the projects of the other. They had a consultation about it, and agreed that it was necessary to effect the escape of the assassin, and thus avoid his being brought to Barletta, where he might expose the conduct of the Captain. But there was great peril in effecting this without involving the keeper in serious difficulties.

When Fieramosca came to obtain leave to visit the dungeon, the Captain had not yet recovered from the effects of his quarrel with Fanfulla, and at first he could not see, whether, if he should grant the request, it would further his plans, or rather interfere with them. However, he had wit enough to take time, and trusting in the cunning of his new acquaintance, he went up stairs, hoping that Don Miguel would find the way of getting him out of his perplexity. The Spaniard, upon hearing Fieramosca's request, remarked: —

"Had we offered him a bribe, he could not serve us better. Leave the whole to me, Conestabile, and you will see whether I know how to work. But . . . remember!"

"All right, say no more. But . . . the nuns!"

"The nuns!" replied Don Miguel with a smile; "we will not touch them; be easy about that. Now give me the keys of the dungeon, and wait for me here."

He took the keys, went down stairs, and opened the door very cautiously. He listened, and heard the mother and son conversing together; he halted on the first of the four or five steps which led down to that hole, and by stretching his neck he was in a position to hear and see those wretched creatures.

The woman had been laid down, her head resting on a log in a corner of the prison, but the excitement and the struggle had brought on a violent fever, and while tossing about in wild frenzy, her face had fallen on the damp earth, and she had not been able to raise it again. The son, with his arms tied on his breast, had endeavored to bring her some relief, but in vain; at last, in despair, he knelt by her, his eyes wandering with a vacant gaze from the mother to the walls.

The woman strove from time to time to lift her head, but she was too weak to help herself. The boy made another effort and succeeded at last in placing his knee under her head, and restoring his mother in her former position; but the jerk gave her a fit of pain so acute that, bringing her hands to her head and giving a long pitiful moan, she said:

"Accursed be the rapier of the Calabrian thief! But if the fiend will allow me only two minutes . . . thou shalt at last hear thy own history. . . . What use in praying to God and Saints? when have they hearkened to me? . . . " And here, raising her half-spent eyes towards the vault, she uttered blasphemies enough to make the hair stand on end of any one but Pietraccio.

"And still," she continued, her ferocious despair having subsided into an expression more distressing and equally deep, "still I too have entertained hopes of forgiveness! . . . when I sang with the rest in the

church! . . . Accursed be the hour I passed that threshold! . . . But what! The Devil had me before I was born! . . . I have endeavored to break loose from him! . . . Behold how I have succeeded! . . ." Then, looking up to the vault again with an expression which it is impossible for language to describe — "Art thou satisfied?" — And she turned to her son: "If thou canst ever escape from here; . . . if thou art a man . . . he who has caused my death and thy ruin must burn with me forever, if there be truth in what we are taught. That night in Rome, when I posted thee at Tor Sanguina to murder that gentleman, and thou, the fool! — didst make noise before striking the blow, and thus wert taken and made what thou art now . . . that man was Cesare Borgia! . . . When he was at the university of Pisa, and I at school in a convent of the same city, he fell in love with me, and I with him, — the infamous wretch and fool that I was! — But I did not know him! . . . Afterwards he came one night to me . . . I had a little daughter of mine, seven years old, with me . . . she awoke . . . she slept in a small room near by . . . she saw him climbing over a window; she gave a loud shriek . . . woe to him had he been discovered! . . . for he had just been proposed for the bishopric of Pampelona . . . he threw pillows on her head . . . and pressed on them with his knees . . . Ah! the fiend! I fell to the ground. . . . Swear here by hell, by my death, that thou wilt kill him; give me a sign with thy head that thou swearest it . . . at least this much . . ."

The assassin, with a pair of eyes fearfully glaring over his mother's countenance, tossed his head and nodded that he would; and the woman, taking from her neck a chain which she concealed under her garment, continued:

"And when thou hast cut his heart open, say to him: look at this chain . . . (dash it on his eye) . . . my mother returns it to you . . . I have not yet done . . . oh! one moment more! then I'll be ready . . . when I recovered I found myself stretched on my couch . . . thou art . . . oh! I cannot couple thy name with that of poor Inez. Oh! how beautiful she was . . . oh! thou art in heaven now! . . . and I! . . . I! . . . why should I go to hell? . . ." These last words were uttered with a yell which shook the very vault. She was dead!

Pietraccio did not appear much moved; with a stupid eye he watched the last convulsions of his mother. When he saw her dead, he crawled to the most distant corner, just as the savage beast, shut up in a cage with the carcass of one of its own species, recoils with horror.

What the mother had revealed to him in broken phrases, and in a delirious fit, he had understood but partially. But it had sunk deep into his mind that he was to revenge many wrongs on Cesare Borgia, but especially, he thought, because his cruelty had reduced him to the condition in which he lay now.

But those revelations had affected Valentino's hireling in a far different manner. Had you seen him in those moments you would have thought that every word of the unfortunate woman lessened his vitality, so much he changed in appearance.

When she fell to the floor it was with great difficulty he held himself on his feet.

With faltering steps he went down, and with a trembling hand he cut the cord which bound Pietraccio. He gazed for a moment on the chain, which the prisoner had instantly placed around his neck, and then said:

"In a few moments a gentleman and lady will come to

see thee. Their object is to set thee free; but let it not appear that it is their doing. Be quick; and while they will try to attend to the woman to see whether she can be helped, up with thee, take to thy heels; fly, and look sharp that they shall not catch thee again; thou art already condemned to death."

He had scarcely uttered these words, when, as if he stood on burning coals, he glanced almost by stealth and with a sickening feeling at the woman, left the poignard in Pietraccio's hands, and swift as lightning hurried away and regained the Conestabile's apartment. At the proper time we shall see how much even the ribald soul of Don Miguel was troubled by what he had seen and heard.

And here we seem to hear the reader exclaiming:—When will there be an end to all these agonizing accounts of assassins, traitors, dungeons, deaths, devils, and worse?

But, to please our reader, while we have been so fortunate as to guess his thoughts, he has not been equally fortunate in giving us credit for the resolution which we had already made of putting an end to these stories and send to the —— Martin and Pietraccio. We must in a confidential way declare that they were growing loathsome even to us, — and we were just about inviting our readers to transfer themselves to the very centre of the Barletta castle, which will present a far different appearance from that when we last met there in company with Don Miguel.

The court-yard and the terraces were spread with silk tapestry of all colors, decorated with wreaths of myrtle and laurel, forming festoons and emblematic figures; and all the banners and flags of the army were streaming

from windows and balconies. A multitude of idle spectators, and of menials busy in arranging everything, were swarming round, now crowding upon each other, then again dispersing through staircases, piazzas, and the court-yard. Soldiers, workmen, servants, and boys ran to and fro carrying tools, shouldering ladders and every kind of furniture to set up the tables or to decorate the theatre. There was an abundance of provisions, fruits, wines and venison presented by the gentlemen of the city and of the army, with an emulous earnestness as to who might do the most in honor of the Spanish Captain. It was the tumult of a people going and coming, calling each other, hallooing to each other, clamoring; in a word, an undescribable uproar and confusion.

As the tower bell struck the hour of fourteen, the great Captain made his appearance at the head of the grand outer staircase, attended by all his barons. He wished to show by the gorgeousness of his attire and of his train the joy he felt at the arrival of his daughter;—a courier had just announced that she was three miles from Barletta.

Over a short gown of frizzed gold cloth he wore a cape of flaming purple velvet, lined with rich sable-skin, and his head was covered with a cap of similar materials. On a sapphire-studded clasp rose an artificial plume made of the finest pearls, strung together with a thread of steel, and it waved over his brow resembling real feathers. The sword and the poniard, sheathed in velvet also of flaming purple, dazzled the eye with a profusion of jewels; and on his left breast he wore the decoration of the order of San Yago, a sword embroidered in red.

A white mule from Cataloña was kept in waiting for him at the foot of the stairs; it was covered by a long

foot-cloth of watered-silk, dyed in violet, embroidered with gold, and reaching to the ground. As soon as he had mounted his mule, his attendants mounted their horses, and the cavalcade started to meet the Lady Elvira.

Prospero and Fabrizio Colonna, dressed in rose-colored calamanco, with a great deal of silver embroidery, rode on each side, upon two Turkish horses, the handsomest that had been for a long time seen in Italy. The two leaders, though past their manhood, sat on high saddles covered with velvet, and managed their fiery steeds with a dexterity so graceful, as to prove themselves to be the great soldiers, who were applauded as the best leaders to be found in any army of those times.

Amongst the attendants Pedro Navarro was remarked by his stern and bulky appearance; he was the inventor of mines, which had served so well at the taking of Castel dell' Uovo. Diego Garcia de Paredes, surnamed the Hercules of his own time, who always appeared encased in iron armor, having no apparrel fit for such an occasion had contented himself with having his arms burnished more carefully than usual, and had chosen the most fiery of all the horses he had in his stable. It was a large stallion from Calabria, lassoed only a few weeks before, tall, of powerful limbs, as black as a raven without a speck of any other color.

Paredes alone dared and was able to manage the wild animal, which, accustomed to the woods, hemmed in now by such a throng, and hearing so much noise, had become furious, snorted, puffed, and foamed like a lion.

But the rider's height, his ponderous armor, and the aid of a bit certainly of half arm's length, which drew blood from the mouth of the horse, tamed him down, and, after having given vent to his fury in a hundred antics

and jumps — people were not slow in making room for him — he took the wise resolution of not deeming himself stronger than Diego Garcia, who, sealed to the saddle, seemed to enjoy those vain efforts.

The flower of the Italian youths mingled on terms of equality with the Spanish barons. Ettore Fieramosca rode between his two dearest friends Inigo Lopez de Ayala and Brancaleone; he wore a mantle of azure satin with embroidery in silver, the work and gift of the women at Sant' Orsola. He was renowned as the best horseman in the army. He mounted a beautiful animal of pearl color with black mane, a present from Signor Prospero, and it had been so well trained by him, that he seemed as if he knew the will of his lord without hint of spurs or bridle.

Fieramosca seemed endowed with the special gift of ever appearing to the greatest advantage in everything, before every one, and in every place.

The form of his limbs was perfect, and their elegant contour was shown by the cut of his white satin dress fitted tight to the person, with scarcely a wrinkle at the thighs and legs. He was so handsome, his carriage so graceful, that as the cavalcade passed along the streets, the crowds gazed only at him, and they admired him above all. The youth was conscious of his triumph, but he felt almost ashamed to catch himself in a thought scarcely pardonable in the softer sex.

At last came the squires of these leaders; and, according to the custom of those times, every master tried to have in his train men of all nations, and the more outlandish and barbarous they were the more valued they would be. There might be seen Turkish Spahis with their small scaly cuirasses and armed with scimetars;

men from the kingdom of Granada with Moorish lances, archers from Tartary, from whom Prospero Colonna had chosen his two attendants, arrayed in very gaudy colors with bows and quivers of silver. There were also Ethiopians from the Upper Egypt armed with long arrows; and their barbarous appearance making a contrast with European faces, exhibited a sight full at once of variety and great beauty.

All the artillery from the towers and barbacans of the castle, and the tolling of all the bells of the town hailed the noble Gonzalo as he started. In the midst of so much noise, the clangor of trumpets and the sound of music was heard from time to time, producing a harmony which, if not perfectly in unison, seemed at least to express the martial glee which animated the troops.

A message was then conveyed to Gonzalo that the Duke of Nemours had already entered Barletta with his barons; therefore, he halted and despatched some of his suite to meet him; and in a few moments the French were seen to enter from the opposite end of the square.

The Duke, perceiving that Gonzalo was dismounted and was advancing to meet him, alighted also, and after they had pressed each other's hands with a noble greeting, the Frenchman courteously remarked that he would deem it great injustice if, being invited to the feast, he should come to disturb it, as would happen in case the father were, even for one instant, delayed in embracing his daughter. He knew that they were going to meet her, and he begged to be allowed to join company with them, feeling sure that, although the war rendered them enemies, the Spanish General would rank him among the first to admire his valor, his wisdom, and all his noble qualities. — Such words could not but meet with a return

of even greater courtesy. The two Generals mounted their horses again and headed the cavalcade, while their retinue followed, mingled indiscriminately, with that interchange of courtesies in which the French have always been the masters.

They had proceeded about a mile from the gates, when the gay and gallant equipage was met by the train which escorted the horse-litter, carrying the Lady Elvira to her father's camp.

She was attended by Vittoria Colonna, daughter of Fabrizio, who was afterwards wedded to the Marquis of Pescara, and became so celebrated for her fortitude, virtue, and wisdom. Gonzalo dismounted, and hastened forward to embrace his daughter, who had alighted from the litter, and fondly pressed her to his heart, calling her *Hija de my alma*, (child of my soul,) and lavishing such caresses on her as made great contrast with the stern gravity of so great a man.

He had appointed Ettore and Inigo to attend on his daughter as squires, and they advanced leading a Spanish jennet for her to ride on. The Italian youth bent on one knee, and the maiden, lightly placing the tip of her foot on the other, seated herself on the saddle with so much grace that none could wish to see better. The pale brow of Fieramosca became suffused with a gentle vermillion, when on his rising Lady Elvira returned thanks to him with such a smile, and with such a look, which at once bespoke her great satisfaction in the choice made of the handsome young knight for her squire.

In consequence, perhaps, of the over-tender indulgence on the part of her father, her manners had not that maturity of wisdom which might be otherwise expected in a young woman of twenty. She did not always temper

her warm heart and her fervid imagination to that correctness of judgment, which is so seldom witnessed in either sex, and which is, however, after virtue, the most valuable jewel of the soul.

Her friend Vittoria Colonna blended that quality with the acuteness and the quickness of a very prompt mind. Although they could be styled both equally handsome, still two beauties of more different cast could not be found. The sparkling eyes of the Lady Elvira, her constant smile, the effect, perhaps, of an innate sense that made her feel that by it she would please more, made at first great impression; the majestic and truly Roman features of Fabrizio's daughter, her handsome face, not very unlike that given by the Greek sculptors to the Muses, a hallowed ray that beamed between her eyelids, worked their way into the heart in a far different manner, and there engendered an affection and a wonder which could not be easily effaced. An observing eye might, perhaps, have imagined there was in her a light dash of conceit. If there was any, her great virtue enabled her afterwards to correct it, and turn it to good.

CHAPTER XII.

The whole company alighted at the castle on their return. The new guests were introduced to the best apartments; and the cortege being broken up, every one went to prepare for the chase and the tournaments which were to be held during the day.

The square had been enclosed with a palisade, outside of which steps, platforms, and galleries were built all around, decorated in the best style; and in small houses built for the purpose, there had been kept for several days bulls, heifers, and wild buffaloes, destined for the exhibitions so much liked by the Italians of those times, and in which even gentlemen of the first rank did not disdain to take part. Within these lists, which were well enclosed and admirably arrayed for the display, the tournament was to take place. A great confluence of persons had assembled and already filled every spot; the roofs, the windows of the adjoining houses, and every available situation were crowded with spectators. Pursuivants, and servants dressed in corsets of various hues and colors, having diligently swept and watered the square, waited for the arrival of Gonzalo.

It was not long before he entered, attended by his train, with the Duke of Nemours at his right, and on his left the Lady Elvira. He rode around the lists, and alighted at a gallery raised on one of the sides higher

than the others, and more richly decorated. Amid the hurrahs and acclamations which people always so liberally bestow on exhibitions of gaudy garments of gold, and of any kind of finery, all took their seats, and the signal was given for the first bull to be let loose.

The murmur of the spectators, and the quarrels which generally take place on such occasions concerning the best places to which every one claims the best right, were hushed in deep silence, as the barrier was opened.

A huge bull dashed furiously into the centre of the lists. His head and foreparts were entirely black, but the back was dark gray. Right and left he lashed with his tail furiously, and went plunging around the lists until he found that there was no chance of escape, and then he halted, rolling his blood-shot eyes with a suspicious look, and fiercely pawing the ground with his forefeet.

At this moment the attention of every one was suddenly called to the noise arising from two men quarrelling together in a part of the lists, for some reason which the people could not learn. But we will let our reader know it, if he will be pleased to follow us back for a few moments to the ladies of Sant' Orsola.

On that evening in which Fieramosca informed them that the combat with the French had been arranged, Ginevra was not alone in feeling anxious for the danger to which he would be exposed. Zornis also was frightened. A haughty and daring temperament is, generally speaking, not easily accessible; but woe to it, if love ever takes possession of it! After that evening she had no peace, rest, or sleep. She spent whole days thinking of only one thing, her mind forever revolving the same ideas without being able to turn her thoughts into any other

channel, or even to busy herself materially in any definite occupation; only, now and then she would for a few moments seat herself at her work embroidering the mantle which was destined for Ettore, and then suddenly starting up she would go to spend long hours on the piazza, where she sat, and at times, without the least consciousness of what she was doing, she would tear off the vine-leaves and other plants which shaded it; at other times she would go out, as if on errands of great importance, and then almost entirely lost to herself, she would slacken her steps, and stand with her eyes riveted on the ground, — always anxious to be alone, and above all, endeavoring to avoid being seen by her friend who, she thought, might at any moment find out what she wished above all to keep concealed.

Ginevra, on her part, was in no less agitation; and we venture to say that the struggle of her soul arose from motives of a great deal more weight and power. The affection which she felt for the Italian youth was the offspring of long intimacy, had been nourished by it, and had been strengthened by the great debt of gratitude she owed to him; and now it was rendered more intense by the impending danger, by the thought that a glorious death might cut him off forever, and by an honorable sentiment of reproach (after all, nothing will excite heart and mind so much as great obstacles) which admonished her that it was her paramount duty to try every means of returning to her husband, and of separating from him who, notwithstanding their agreeing virtue, still held her on the brink of a precipice. She remembered that she had promised to God and to the Patroness of the Monastery that she would inform Ettore of the resolution she had taken of separating from him;

but on the evening she had determined to communicate that resolution, he had come with the news of the challenge; this was a good excuse for putting off the communication; but still she felt within herself, that although a concession might be made for the delay, she was not at all warranted to consider herself free from the obligation she had contracted.

But besides these thoughts which were harrowing enough, a painful suspicion in reference to her friend had already crept into her mind. Women have an innate sense, I might say an instinct, which leads them to discover the existence of love, no matter how deeply concealed it may be in the inmost recesses of the heart. Ginevra very soon perceived a great change in Zorais; and too well did she guess at the cause of it. The two friends spent several days in this state of mind, their intercourse enlivened no more by the former affectionate and true-hearted intimacy.

In the meanwhile the tournament which was to take place in Barletta, was the only topic of conversation between the gardener Gennaro, the lay-sisters, and the men-at-arms of the tower; and if any happened to go to town, they would bring home a deal of news about the preparations that were made, and how great the expected festivities would be; so much so, that on that blessed morning, all, except only those who absolutely could not leave, went to Barletta at the peep of day, to secure good places. The gardener, who, like all southern people, was passionately fond of public spectacles and amusements, having donned his best apparel, and stuck a handsome bouquet on the band of his hat, was on the point of entering his little boat, long before the break of day. Zorais made her appearance at the top of the steps

which led to the seashore, dressed with more care than the hour and place seemed to demand.

"Gennaro, I would like to go to Barletta with thee." ..... Gennaro noticed some hesitation in her manner; and as he was accustomed to be always addressed by her in a resolute and abrupt tone, he gazed at her for a moment before he welcomed her, then added that he would feel honored by her company, and only regretted he had not washed the boat, and covered it with some sort of carpet, to make the seat more soft. "But I'll be back in an instant; it will not take me a minute," he said, and started to go for what was needed. Zornis held him back by the arm, and the grasp was so fierce that he looked at her full in the face. He thought in his mind: is she crazy or possessed?

Ginevra was still in bed, and Zornis did not wish to give an explanation as to the motives of her trip, which would surely give rise to wonder in her friend's mind, this being the first time she had left the Monastery. She was impatient of delay, as every moment she imagined to see Ginevra coming.

Hence with words more of command than of request, she hurried the gardener into the boat, and he was obliged to paddle away towards Barletta. Gennaro never stopped his gabble, as he was rowing; he felt sure he could introduce her everywhere; Gonzalo's valet was a great friend of his; no one could secure for her a better place to enjoy the feast. They arrived at the Castle when Gonzalo's train and the French barons had started to meet the Lady Elvira. Zornis begged of Gennaro not to leave her, but she could not prevail on him to stay by her, and he rushed on amidst the dust, and the jostling of the populace, to follow the cavalcade. Only he

led her to the Tavern of the Sun, promising, most faithfully, that he would be back in a very short time.

But he was detained longer than he thought, and was late in keeping his promise; so that when he entered the square, every place was occupied, and he despaired at once to find room for himself and his friend. But by polite requests and by strong elbowing, he opened his way through the people, who had thronged even behind the galleries, and succeeded in gaining a place under one of them. It was near the avenue through which the combatants entered the lists; but he could see nothing else but the legs of the spectators dangling over his head, and he felt deeply mortified at the failure of his great promises in the capacity of a guide. Luckily, at the moment when the bull was released, Fanfulla da Lodi, who was one of the marshals of the day, came out of the lists; he caught the eye of Zorais, who looked around with an air of vexation, and then recognized Gennaro, who thus immediately addressed him: —

"*Eccellenza Illustrissima!* See this good lady; she is dying with desire to see the feasts, but we came too late. . . ."

Zorais perceived in the excited and fiery looks of the young soldier, that he felt, indeed, disposed to grant the requested assistance, and more too; and she kept punching at Gennaro with her elbow, to make him hold his tongue; but it was too late. Fanfulla came to her assistance, and led her by the hand to an open space behind the galleries, making the populace give way with his truncheon, and then, raising his eye, he looked for a seat where he could place her.

It was in an evil hour that Martin Schwarzenbach, the *Conestabile* of Sant' Orsola, betook himself to one of the

top seats of a gallery, and sat there enjoying in perfect ease a full view of the lists, his knees wide apart, and his arms crossed on his breast. Fanfulla would not have missed for a thousand florins the good chance he saw before him to have a little fun, and on such terms too. With his wand, he could only reach the heel of the German, who was at the height of eight or ten feet from the ground; he tapped him lightly, and that wight bent his looks down to see what was wanted. Fanfulla, with the coolest air, brought his right hand to the height of his forehead, waved the fingers up and down, and, with a slight motion of the head sideways, a wink from the eye, and a twist from the mouth, he made him understand that he wanted his seat for the woman he had with him. In truth, the expression of his face would have irritated even a dead man. Martin, trusting for defence in the height of his position, and the thought of that split barrel recurring, perhaps, to his memory, gave a shrug of the shoulders, as much as to say, — Go about your business, — and then resumed his former attitude.

"Tedesco! Tedesco!" then said Fanfulla, with a loud voice, and a toss of his head, "thou art purchasing a good dose of the stick; however, make up thy mind that thou hast seen enough of the feasts for this day."

But Martin did not move; he only grumbled; because, after all, he had misgivings as to the intentions of his assailant, although at such a distance.

Not sooner said than done; Fanfulla jumped on a board which lay across, caught the Conestabile by the legs, — the movement was so sudden, that Martin had no time to recover himself, — unseated him, and dragged him down, thinking he could lay him flat on the ground; but the unfortunate Martin had got jammed between two

rough planks, through which his belly could not slip, and he cried lustily for "Help!" and "Mercy!" The other man kept on pulling, and shaking, and jerking, and was not satisfied until he had drawn the poor fellow down, covered with bruises and scratches. This done, he said, with an air of compassionate feeling: "I am sorry to the heart; but didn't I tell thee that thou hadst already seen enough of the joust?" Then, with great politeness, and dignified self-possession, he helped Gennaro and Zornis to ascend the steps, and mingled with the crowd, laughing heartily at the thousand and one curses hurled after him by the Captain, who, trying to compose himself, and feeling whether he had any bones broken, picked up his hat, sword, and gloves, apparently very sorely exercised by his defeat.

Zornis, who, from the place secured to her by Fanfulla's exertions, had obtained a full view of the lists, gave a searching look all around, and rested them on the balcony in front of her, where she saw Ettore, who, seated by the Lady Elvira among the noblest barons, entertained her, and endeavored to prove by his courtesy and gallantry that he was worthy of having been chosen her knight in attendance for the day. The Spanish maiden, warm-hearted, of a fervid soul, and with a disposition to levity, pretended, perhaps, to ascribe his attentions to a cause which flattered her conceit equally with her heart. They were observed by two females, who, at different distances and with different feelings, did not let a single motion of theirs escape. Zornis was one; she was too far to hear their conversation, but she felt so much interested, and watched them with a feeling of so much anxiety, and followed every change so closely, as to be satisfied that the daughter of Gonzalo knew well how

to appreciate the gallant Italian, and that it was some other feeling besides the kindly courtesy which animated her manners towards him; she did not feel warranted in forming an opinion of Ettore's sentiments, but even a shadow can make a heart in such a plight as hers tremble.—The other observer was Vittoria Colonna; she knew, from experience, that the youthful Elvira did not know how to guard herself against the influence of a handsome face and of fascinating manners. She had an affection true and deep-rooted for her friend; and the stern brow and the piercing looks of the daughter of Fabrizio evidently betrayed that she felt ill at ease, and that she highly disapproved a conversation which was becoming intimate and might be fraught with serious consequences.

The first bull let loose in the lists had, at first, been abandoned to the mercy of any one who might feel disposed to attack him; several had proved their skill with various success but without any decisive advantage. Diego Garcia occupied a lateral balcony, from which many Spaniards and Italians, together with the French barons, were witnessing the game; at last he yielded to the requests of many of those foreigners who wished him to show his dexterity in this kind of warfare. Nowadays, the skill of a *matador* is exhibited in Spain by plunging the sword betwixt the vertebræ of the neck at the moment the animal lowers its head to gore its assailant; but, in those times, when the ponderous weapons increased the power of a warrior's arm, to sever with one blow the head of the bull from the trunk, was deemed the perfection of the art; and it was often done by those who had both strength and skill.

Paredes entered the arena, carrying a huge, long sword

—*spadone*—on his left shoulder, dressed in a tight corset of buffalo skin, with uncovered head. He saw that the bull had been wounded, and was losing blood; hence he beckoned to the pursuivants, and called for a fresh one. The fatigued bull having been lassoed, and pulled away, they opened one of the small stables, and another of larger frame and of more ferocious appearance burst forth. Emerging from darkness into the open, dazzling light of the sun, exasperated and furious, the bull dashed forward, tearing up the ground around the lists, as such animals are wont, until perceiving his antagonist, he halted before him, lowered his head, roaring, and with the length of his tongue hanging out of his mouth, he looked as if he was taking a position; he backed, and with its forefeet pawed the sand into a cloud that enveloped his neck and back. Garcia's strength was great; but it would have been dangerous to try it with a bull whose forehead was armed with horns of unusual length, and with a neck so wide and so bulky as to fear no attack; the Spaniard saw the need of extreme caution. With both hands lifting his *spadone* over the left, and with the left foot stamping the ground twice or three times, he shouts at the beast: "ah! ah!" The bull, lowering his horns, rushes upon his enemy; the latter, just as he is accosted, falls back on one side and bestows upon the bull's neck a blow from his *spadone* with so much nerve, and so well aimed, that the head rolls on the ground, and the body darts three or four steps forwards before it fell.

A universal burst of acclamations applauded Don Garcia, as he immediately regained his seat among the spectators. The French knights, unacquainted with this manner of combat, and witnessing the ease with which

the Spaniard had despatched the bull, did not deem it a feat of much difficulty. And as they were all men in the prime of youth and of great strength, and very skilful in the use of arms, remarked that they would also do the same. And La Motte was even more confident than the rest in expressing his opinion that it was not so very difficult to perform the deed. Made prisoner by Garcia, as the reader well remembers, he had ransomed himself; of a disdainful soul, he heartily hated the Spaniard; not that he had been discourteously treated, but he could not bear to have always before his eyes him to whom he had been forced to humble himself.

He applauded Garcia, it is true, to avoid the charge of being envious and uncourteous; but with a look which modern Frenchmen call *suffisant*, for which the Italians have not perhaps a corresponding word, but in English might be rendered *self-sufficient*. With a haughty mien, bolt upright, not deigning to turn towards him in full person, which was a habit peculiar to himself, he remarked: "Bravo, Don Diego; good cut, *par Notre Dame;*" then addressing a Frenchman at his side, added with a smile; "*grand meschef a été que le taureau n'eût pas sa cotte de mailles; la rescousse eût été pour lui.*" *

Paredes understood him, felt enraged, and said to himself; *Voto a Dios que he da saber si ese perro frances tiene los dentes largos como la lengua.*† He accosted the Frenchman and said to him:

"How many bright gold ducats will you please to pay if I cut the neck of a bull protected with a coat of mail

* Great pity the bull had not on his coat-of-mail: he would have gained the victory.

† I vow to God, that I wish to know whether this French cur has teeth as long as his tongue.

when you could not cut it naked? But even without any consideration of ducats, lest people think that Diego Garcia works for money like a *torero*, let honor alone be pledged, and let us see whether you can strike a blow like mine as well as you can laugh at it."

The challenge did not please La Motte much, and he bit the tongue that provoked it; not that he was a coward; on the contrary, he was a daring man and true; but as this was the first time that he happened on such adventure, he did not well know how to meet the encounter. But he could not retreat; with such spectators as were around him he felt obliged to leap the ditch. Accordingly he boldly replied:

"In truth, it would not be indecorous for a French knight to refuse a combat with a bull, but it shall never be said that Guy de la Motte ever shrank from using his sword, let the occasion be whatever it might. To the trial."—And he rose, muttering between his teeth—"*Chien d'Espagnol, si je pouvais te tenir sur dix pieds de bon terrain, au lieu de la bête!*" * . . . He had closely watched and well learned Garcia's tactics in striking the successful blow; a young chevalier, a man of arms, and a Frenchman, could he feel mistrust?

This challenge so novel had roused the surrounding young soldiers to the highest pitch of excitement. The commotion and the murmur had been noticed in Gonzalo's gallery; the cause was soon told; it spread through the galleries like wildfire, and was received by the spectators with joy. However, the news passed from mouth to mouth with strange transformations, the more strange as they originated from individuals of the lower classes.

* Dog of a Spaniard, would to God I could hold thee on ten feet of fair ground, rather than the beast!

But nowhere was the report so misrepresented as where Zorais was, at the very farthest point from Gonzalo's balcony. The most distant among the spectators al-always pretending to know more than those who were the nearest, there was a waving of the heads, and upturning of faces which evidently marked the progress of the news as it ran through the steps and seats of the spectators. Gennaro had been up on his feet some time, stretching his neck, and impatiently trying to catch some information as to the cause of the tumult. He, Zorais and their neighbors had seen the commotion in the balcony where the knights and their leaders sat, then they saw the former leaving their places and scatter over the lists; the feast seemed interrupted; no other bull was let loose; and they inquired of each other, — what is the matter? what now? — but all inquired, and no one replied. At last one near by said, — "The challenge between the Italians and the French is to come off now, here in the lists." — "O! bah!" — said another, "don't you see Fieramosca up there, nailed to the balcony? Truly, by the way he is talking to that young lady he does not seem to be in any humor for a fight just now." — Zorais overheard it and sighed. Another from the other side chimed in; — "They say that the French captain has challenged Gonzalo, and whoever kills the bull, which is a *bandito* from Quarato, will have gained the day, and will be the lord of the kingdom." But then several pursuivants were in a bustle around one of the small stables, and seemed to be about rousing another bull. Diego Garcia was standing on one side with his *spadone* on his shoulder in the midst of a group of men, all apparently addressing him at once, all in a flurry, as if they wished to impress something upon his mind; but

on his brow, bold and lofty, towering over the rest, was seen, even from afar, the immovable determination that he would accomplish what he had promised, however full of danger the attempt might be. Not far from him was a group of Frenchmen drawn closely around La Motte, encouraging him to prevent the shame of defeat.

A spectator, occupying one of the lowest seats, and who had just concluded a conversation with Veleno who stood by him, remarked, turning his eyes up to Gennaro: "This good man here says that yon gentlemen have laid a wager that they will swallow a pint of Greek wine at one draught in the very teeth of the bull." Many laughed at the pleasantry; but the titter soon ceased when they saw Fanfulla, with men-at-arms under his command, clearing the lists, in the centre of which the Spanish giant stood alone with that great *spadone* of his on his shoulder.

Paredes felt how difficult it would be for him to come out of this contest with honor; notwithstanding his Herculean strength, it was an undertaking of great boldness to cut the neck of a bull covered with an iron coat-of-mail; hence he had provided himself with another *spadone* of more weight than the former one, and which he used only when he had to assault or defend entrenchments; he had run home for it, had it sharpened to a roundish edge, and having hastily taken some food as it came to hand, he had washed it down with half a gallon of good Spanish wine. He had had plenty of time to do all this, as it was not an easy task nor free from danger, to fasten around a bull's neck a coat-of-mail. This armor had been left open in front, the horns drawn through the arm-holes, and remained fastened under the neck, the collar dangling down in front. But whoever

has seen bull fights in our own times, knows that it is possible, with the help of hempen cords fastened to the animal's horns, to hold it at bay in dark places, and force it to submit to any treatment.

Amidst the flourishing of trumpets, and every kind of instruments, a king-at-arms came forward. He was dressed in a kind of scapular, red and yellow, with the Spanish arms on his breast and on his back. With a motion of his truncheon he commanded silence, and with a loud voice proclaimed as follows:

"In the name of the Catholic King, Ferdinand, King of Castile, Leon, of the Kingdom of Granada, West Indies, etc. etc. etc., Don Gonzalo Hernandez de Cordova, Marquis of Almenares, Commander, Chevalier of the order of San Jago, Captain, Governor for His Catholic Majesty of the Kingdom this side of the Faro, defends all here present, under penalty of two *strappados*, or more to his pleasure, from interfering by words, acclamations, signs, or any action whatever, with the combat which will take place immediately between the bull and the *Illustrissimo Magnifico Cavaliere Don Diego Manrique de Lara Conte de Paredes.*"

A response was flourished from all the trumpets. The spectators of all classes either through courtesy, knowing that by the slightest movement on the part of the bull, the life of the intrepid Spaniard might be jeoparded, or through fear of the straps, were hushed into so deep silence, that when the little bull-house was opened, the drawing of its bolt was distinctly heard from one end to the other of the amphitheatre. A bull came out, but not with the mad fury of those before; nor was he so large as the rest, but he was thick, and all black; moreover, he was a great deal more savage; he also halted at ten steps

from Don Garcia, and fixed his eyes upon him, lashed himself with his tail, and pawed the sand. His antagonist kept motionless, the sword lifted in the air, his wide open eyes gazing attentively, well knowing that a false aim might cost him his life. The beast moved at last, the first steps slowly; then at once he gave a roar and a plunge, and rushed with lowered head upon Garcia. The Spaniard, thinking he would be able to cut the bull's head as he had done in the former struggle, darted on one side, and let the blow fall with all the power of his arm; but either because the sword did not fall straight or because the bull had made a *contre-temps*, the weapon rebounded on the coat, and the bull turned upon him with so much fury that, to keep him at a distance, the Spaniard had scarcely time to address his aim at the front where it was protected by the iron collar, and there he held the point of the *spadone*. Then, indeed, the whole strength of Paredes was put to the test. There he stood with his feet wide apart, one before the other, the *spadone* held with both hands, the hilt resting against his breast, and the point holding on to the bull's front, and thereby succeeded in keeping him at bay; the thick and strong blade stood the trial; and the strain on Paredes's part was so intense that the sinews and the muscles of his thighs and legs quivered and swelled as well as the veins of the neck and forehead; the hue of his face turned red at first, then into a purple tint; and he bit his under lip so fiercely as to draw blood from it.

The bull, seeing that the avenue to an attack was precluded on that side, drew back; and, taking field again, rushed upon Garcia with renewed fury. Garcia felt a fever seizing upon him from the shame of having missed his blow; in the twinkling of his eye he looked up

to the galleries and saw La Motte's countenance shadowed with a sneering look; the sight maddened him, and feeling a new impulse added to his strength, lifted the sword as high as his arm could reach and let it fall on the bull's neck with such crashing force that he would have cut it had it been of bronze. At first he cut one of the horns like a bulrush, then the coat-of-mail and the vertebræ, stopping only at the hide of the dew-lap, by which the head still hung, while the body went rolling on the ground amid a cloud of dust.

Such an exciting exhibition of skill and strength elicited a burst of acclamation so tremendous and so unanimous, that it sounded like a clap of thunder. Paredes let the *spadone* fall at his feet, stood panting for a few moments, while the purple of his cheeks turned into a pale color, which however did not last long. He was immediately surrounded by his friends, feasting and greeting him. Some admired him, some handled the *spadone*, others examined the width of the wound, and the neatness of the blow, and meantime the bands made the valley reëcho with their enthusiastic strains.

The Spaniard had come out of his engagement with honor. Now it was the turn for La Motte. The skilful blow of his antagonist led him to pause; he could never hope to equal him; and should he even succeed (although it was a dubious matter) in cutting in twain the neck of a bull unprotected by any armor, the praises bestowed upon him would be of an inferior order; moreover his inexperience in this manner of warfare made him have misgivings as to his chances of success. At all events he felt that he could not come out of the affair with honor, and he became almost crazy from sheer spite.

When the Spaniard presented himself to invite him to enter the lists, he refused in an insulting manner, and added, that French chevaliers, on horse and with lance, held the first rank in the world, and as noble chevaliers they would fight and conquer their equals in just warfare, but they left to hinds and butchers the art of killing bulls; — let the matador be gone, and bother him no more. To those beastly remarks, Diego Garcia made a reply of equal and worse import; both laid their hands upon their hilts, and the quarrel, taking place in the balcony occupied by the knights, attracted the attention of Gonzalo, of the Duke of Nemours, and of all the spectators. To make it short, a new challenge was then given; and Garcia in a sonorous and terrible voice called out the French, and challenged them to encounter him, saying he would prove to them that even in this warfare the Spaniards not only were their equals, but by far their superiors.

The Captains of France and Spain were delighted when they saw that a martial spirit was not only kept up but even fanned into fury in the two armies, through these quarrels and challenges, which seemed to reproduce among their followers the romantic deeds sung by bards and troubadours. Therefore they granted that even this challenge should be accepted; and in a few moments the number and the names of the combatants were agreed upon, and it was determined that they would meet within two days, ten on each side, on the beach along the road to Bari. But it was enjoined as a preliminary condition that no more was to be said that day about the challenge, so that the festivities should not be interrupted. The champions on both sides were satisfied, and all returned peacefully to their places.

Whilst these arrangements were carried on, the men-at-arms, who had charge of the lists, carried away the body of the last bull, and spread the place with sand and saw-dust, covering every spot of blood. Fanfulla, under whose direction the pursuivants were at work, had received orders from Gonzalo to arrange everything for the jousts. In a few moments, they erected a wall, or rather a partition, made of planks, supported by posts fixed in holes prepared for the purpose beforehand. It was extended through the whole length of the amphitheatre, like the axis traversing through the focus of an ellipse; its height was about to the breast of a man of average size. The extremities did not reach the palisade, and at these points an opening for three horses abreast was left under the galleries. The rules of this kind of joust were, that when the knights intended to run with blunted lances, two at a time placed themselves at the opposite extremities, on each side of the partition, and both had it on their right; then the combatants spurred their horses, and ran close to the wall, and aimed a blow at each other as they met. It was a dangerous passage-at-arms, as the horse could not mistake it, and the rider knew also beforehand where they would encounter. At the two ends of the lists were placed two barrels, with one head stove in, filled with sand, in which lances of all sizes were standing, that the knights might make their choice and replace their own as they passed by, in case theirs were broken in the encounter, without advantage on either side. Then they vaulted around the extremities, and ran to meet each other again over the course before occupied by the adversary.

When everything was ready, Fanfulla advanced to the foot of the balcony in which the Lady Elvira was seated,

and informed her that it became her duty to give the signal. The daughter of Gonzalo threw into the lists a handkerchief; at the same time, the trumpet sounded the onset, and three Spaniards entered the lists; they were mounted, sheathed in highly polished armor, glistening in the sun; and the waving plumage of their helmets, the rich embroidery and the profusion of ornaments, presented a sight seldom witnessed. They undertook to defend the field, challenging any opponents to combat with lance and mace, — to break three of the former, and give two blows with the latter.

The champions were Don Louis de Correa y Xarcio, Don Inigo Lopez de Ayala, and Don Ramon Blasco de Azevedo.

A herald then advanced and called the names of the three challengers, and proclaimed, according to the laws of tourneys, that none should dare by word or action to interfere with the combatants. The shields of each knight were suspended under the balcony of Gonzalo, and their names were written in golden letters. The challengers rode around the enclosure, and retréated to one extremity of the lists under a huge standard, in which were painted the turrets and lions of Castile, and the bars of Aragona; it was held by a squire richly dressed, and it streamed over his head.

The prize to be awarded to the victor of this tourney, was a helmet of exquisite workmanship; it was surmounted by a statuette of Victory instead of a crest. The goddess held in one hand a golden branch, in the other the helmet's plume; it was from the chisel of Raffaello del Moro, a celebrated Florentine artist. It was placed upon the point of a lance near the barrier where the three Spanish barons had entered.

Bayard, the pride and glory of the profession of arms, entered the lists first, mounted on a handsome bay of Normandy, white spotted on three feet, and with black mane; the handsome points of the steed were hidden, as usual, by the long trappings which covered him from the ears to the tail; the housing was of light green crossed by vermilion bars, with the knight's coat-of-arms embroidered on the shoulders and haunches, and it was hemmed with fringes which reached to the horse's knees. Bunches of plumes waving over the head and crupper, and the pennon fluttering from the extremity of his lance, as well as the feather surmounting the helmet, were of the same colors. There was nothing extraordinary in the form of the rider, who, in fact, from the appearance he made under his armor, did not even exhibit the average strength of the men-at-arms of those times. He advanced, managing the steed, who, lightly touched with the spur and restrained by the bit, capered and caracoled, swung his head right and left, arching his neck, and, with a long flowing tail, lashed and raised the sand.

He paused before the balcony in which the Lady Elvira was seated, and after having paid his compliments to her by lowering the point of his lance, struck with its foot the shield of Inigo until it rang three times. Then holding the lance in his left, already encumbered by bridle and buckler, he took the battle-axe which hung from the pommel of his saddle, and twice he struck with it Correa's shield; he thus meant to defy the former to break three lances, and the latter to prove his strength at the battle-axe twice. After this, he retreated to the entrance of the lists.

Without a moment's delay Inigo was at his place op-

posite to his antagonist, and both had their lances in rest with the points glancing in the air. Bayard had kept his visor open all this time, and it had been remarked that his face was of an ashy paleness; so that the spectators were greatly astonished that he should dare, or that he should even have strength to do battle that day. Now he ordered his squire to clasp the visor, remarking, that in spite of the *quartana* * — he had been four months afflicted with it — he felt confident that he would not disgrace the French arms that day.

The trumpets sounded a third time, and the two warriors and their horses vanished from their posts as if impelled by one motion. To bend on their lances, to spur their horses, to dash into full career with the rapidity of a winged flight, were simultaneous movements, and both knights charged each other with equal fury. Inigo aimed at the helmet of his antagonist, — a mark difficult to hit, but of sure effect; but almost in the moment of the encounter, thinking that before such spectators it would be more prudent to take an aim that would not miss, he only directed the point of his lance at the shield of Bayard. The French champion who was, perhaps, the most skilful of all men-at-arms of that age, aimed a blow at Inigo's visor, and so true did he hit him, that he could have done no better had both been standing. The helmet sparkled at the shock, the spear went into shivers, and the Spaniard reeled on his left side, where he had also lost the stirrup, and it was feared he would fall.

The two champions ran on their career to meet on the opposite side, and Inigo, throwing away with rage the staff of his spear, snatched another lance as he passed.

* Intermittent fever.

In the second encounter there was no advantage on either side; and Inigo questioned in his own heart whether the French champion had not refrained through courtesy from fully exhibiting his dexterity. But on the third run the doubt became certainty. Inigo broke his lance on the visor of his adversary, but the latter only grazed with his weapon the cheek of the Spaniard, and it was evident that the mistake had not been involuntary. The trumpets sounded, the acclamations were loud, and the judges awarded equal honors to the combatants, who rode up together to the balcony of the Lady Elvira to do homage to her. While she received them with words of praise, Gonzalo also bestowed on them his encomium, and the Duke of Nemours said to the champions: *Chevaliers, c'est bel et bon.*

Inigo might yield in every thing but in generosity; and he proclaimed the courtesy exhibited by Bayard towards him; while Bayard, with that modesty which is always the companion of virtue, denied the charge and protested that he had done his best. Gonzalo brought this contention of courtesy to an end by remarking,—

"From your words one may doubt as to who has better broken his lance; one thing is certain, however, there are not in the world more noble, more generous chevaliers than you."

CHAPTER XIII.

At the signal from the trumpets, Correa, armed with an axe and a small round buckler, came forward to answer the challenge of Bayard, who, having alighted from his horse, had changed it for a fresh one, and was ready for the combat. The two knights advanced towards each other, not spurring their steeds to full speed, but restraining them with spur and bridle to half-gallop, until they came near meeting. In encounters of this sort the velocity of the onset would not increase the force of the blows, as in the case of a contest with lances. The force of a blow depended chiefly upon the nerve of the arm, and in a great measure upon managing the horse so as to make him rear at the proper time and poise on his hind legs; and then as he came down on his forefeet, the knight would catch the moment to let fall his weapon, usually addressing it to the helmet of the adversary; and if this was done with true aim, the shock was generally such that it was almost impossible to resist it. In the first encounter, the two horses, well broken and skilfully trained, reared and fell at one time; and the knights being protected by their shields could not hit each other, but passed on. The same happened in the second encounter. Bayard saw the manœuvre of his antagonist; and the third time he spurred more quickly against Correa, who was forced to do the same. As they met,

the Frenchman reined the horse down on its haunches, just as the Spaniard, taken unawares, had made his steed rear, and was addressing his aim to the helmet, but the horse alighted and the aim was missed. Bayard skilfully seized the moment, uplifted the axe with both hands, spurred his horse, and rising in his stirrups, dealt a blow on the helmet of his adversary which made him reel over the animal's neck; and when the spectators thought that he would recover himself, he fell to the ground stunned, and two of his squires bore him away from the lists. Bayard left the lists also, bowing towards the balcony of Lady Elvira amidst the acclamations of the whole amphitheatre, and the music of the bands applauding his victory. But he had to turn back and fight Azevedo, who, advancing, had offered himself to finish the combat in place of his comrade. This encounter lasted longer, and with varied success; still the honors of the victory were awarded to the French knight.

An enclosure had been reserved near the entrance guarded by a palisade, for the keeping of horses, the accommodation of armorers, and for a tent pitched for the use of the knights and their attendants, wherein they might retire and arm themselves. Gonzalo had given instructions that everything should be in readiness that might be necessary. There might be seen several tables set to lay armors upon, a farrier with a small portable forge, that he might mend any parts of the armors, and lastly, a side-table with an abundance of wines and refreshments. Brancaleone had been detailed for the duty of superintending this department, and had been particularly charged to see that nothing was wanting.

Whilst he was performing his duty, Graiano d'Asti,

whom he had seen on the occasion of carrying the challenge to the French camp with Fieramosca, arrived with two attendants, who carried his arms and led his warhorse. Brancaleone, who, as was his wont, had heretofore spoken very little, advanced and greeted him with more words and show of courtesy than was his custom. If you had been well acquainted with his ways, observing how he acted on this occasion, you would have easily known that he had some secret motive for forming an acquaintance with that man; in fact, he had a particular end in view, and of great importance, as we shall see at the proper time.

After the first welcome and offer of service, and after having procured whatever he wanted, Brancaleone continued conversing with him, while his attendants helped him to disrobe himself of the costly garments he wore, and to put on a jacket and tight leather breeches, over which he was to fit the armor.

Graiano's armor was of exquisite workmanship, with gilt stripes on well-burnished steel, and was laid on the table in pieces. Brancaleone examined every part of it carefully; and holding the breast-piece in his hand to help buckle it on the knight, he saw that it was a double plate, and judged it impenetrable; the plate covering the belly was also double and of equal strength; and with his practised eye he observed that the braces, cuishes, and greaves might stand any blow. A close observer would have remarked that during this examination there was something strange in his countenance, and in the grin on his lips; but at that moment none would take notice of it. Only the helmet remained to be fitted on; and Brancaleone, as he took it up and examined it, perceived that its strength was not in keeping with the other

pieces; he asked Graiano whether he was in the habit of wearing an iron head-piece; and being answered in the negative, he questioned him how it happened that whilst he protected every part of his person with arms so strong, he neglected to use the same precaution for the head.

"Because," answered Graiano, "at the siege of an insignificant little castle not worth three cents, — and that madcap of Montpensier was bent on taking it, — just as I had applied the ladder to mount the walls, some of those Abruzzo villains who defended it, rolled a huge stone over me, which falling edgewise, stove the helmet in, and made a hole in my head, that will be entirely healed only, I believe, when they shall throw a shovelful of dirt over it. And see here!"

And saying this, he took Brancaleone's hand, and bringing it to his head, made him feel a notch on the top of the cranium, from which it was evident that he could not bear a helmet much heavier than the one on the table.

"In consequence of this wound — hanged be the man who inflicted it! — I have lost a great many ducats; as I was obliged to leave King Charles, and remain under cure for many months. It is true, however," he added with a laugh, "that by it I got rid of the burden of a wife, ... so there was both evil and good in the whole. Then I hired myself to that wretch of the Valenza; until, as it pleased God, I rejoined the French, and with them at least there is no rain falling on the hire, nor snow either, and at the close of each month they pay out florins in ready money, as they do at the Martelli Bank in Florence."

"But how could this light helmet stand a smart cut?" rejoined Brancaleone.

"Oh!" answered the knight, "I don't trouble myself much about that. First, it is a Damascus plate, and of a cast than which no better can be obtained; and then I tell thee that when in an encounter I perceive that they wish to chase the flies from around my head, I can use the buckler so that it will take a man of great skill to reach me. See here" (and he showed him the shield and the thong by which it hung); "see how long I have it, in order to keep my arm free."

Brancaleone said no more, but went on examining the casque on every side, and made it ring with the knuckles of his fingers, with an air of nonchalance which he could put on with a wonderful effect; then he opened it, and fitted it on the head of the knight with his own hands.

In the meanwhile the three Spaniards and Bayard had run their career as we have narrated. The latter, having conquered his opponents, entered the tent where Graiano had just finished arming himself, and was on the point of mounting his horse. The Knight of Asti spoke some words of courtesy to the victor, and thinking that Brancaleone paid no attention to them, he inquired of Bayard what he thought of the antagonists.

Bayard took off his gauntlets, laid them with his helmet on the table, and wiping the perspiration, remarked:

"Don Inigo de Ayala, *bonne lance, foy de chevalier.*"

And to the rest he awarded such praises as he thought they deserved; then gave to the knight who was going forth to the combat some advice concerning the encounter — and it was not lost.

Graiano entered the lists nobly bestriding a heavy brown horse covered with housing of orange color, and a herald loudly proclaimed his name. Then he advanced towards the balcony of Gonzalo, and struck with his

lance the shields of Azevedo and Inigo, and made them ring three times. An involuntary inward shudder shook every fibre of Fieramosca's frame, as he heard that name. He again reproached himself for not having informed Ginevra that he was alive; and as a man is more ready to make good resolutions when the time for their execution is the farthest distant, he again purposed to tell her of it at the first opportunity.

By this time the warriors had met, and the Piedmontese, who for robustness and skill in combat was held among the very first, gained a decisive advantage over Azevedo, although he did not succeed in unhorsing him; and with Inigo he fought so well that the judgment of the spectators was generally awarded in his favor. Many of the French party proved their lances after him; among the rest, Seigneur De la Pelisse, Chandenier, Obigni, and La Motte, who, irritated by the quarrel he had with Garcia on the subject of fighting the bull, actually did wonders that day.

In fact, the three Spaniards, who had undertaken to defend the lists, had the worst of it, and were made to feel their rashness in taking alone the field against the best lances of the French army. However, Inigo and Azevedo were still on their saddles; and Graiano who had already tried his lance with them, advanced to the encounter for a second time. Perhaps it was fortunate for him that so much fighting had weakened them; however, it was his fortune to end the contest by unhorsing them one after the other, and thus to carry off the honors of the day. In the midst of the flourishes from the bands and the applauses of the spectators, he received from the hands of Lady Elvira the rich helmet, the award of his victory. The tournament being thus ended, Gonzalo rose, and

accompanied by his daughter, the Captain of France, and all the barons, resumed his way towards the Rock, where, it being the time for the banquet, the tables were spread, and preparations actively pushed. The square and the lists became soon deserted, the whole crowd, strangers and townsmen, breaking up and dispersing towards their homes or to the taverns, especially to that of Venom, a favorite resort, and much frequented, where they sought rest and refreshment, discussing among themselves the fortunes of the day.

The morning of that day in which fate had reserved the most dreadful blows for Ginevra, she had awakened one hour later than usual. Filled with continual anguish by self-reproach, she had not enjoyed any rest until break of day; but her slumbers were broken, and troubled with a hundred fantastic dreams. Now she saw Fieramosca wounded, and with a failing eye looking up to her for comfort; again she saw him victorious, crowned with glory, surrounded by barons and turning from her with disdain; he would pay homage to another woman to whom he offered his hand. And in her sleep she would try to reassure herself, saying: — "happy I am that it is only a dream!" — Still, she trembled, seeming to hear the festival sounds reëchoing the joys of Ettore's nuptials, the ringing of bells, and the booming of the cannon; and at last their sound struck upon her ears so that she suddenly started, opened her eyes, and turning them towards the balcony whence Barletta was seen, she felt that if all the rest had been a dream, the noise that had awakened her was a reality. She arose on her bed, and thrusting her small snow-white foot from under the coverlids into a crimson slipper, while she was throwing around her shoulders a morning dress of azure color,

parted with both her hands the long auburn tresses falling behind her ears.

She took her seat under the vines of the baicony, gazing at, with eyes dazzled by the light of a serene and liquid sky, the majestic panorama displayed before her.

The sun had been two hours above the horizon, and illumined the shore, the town, and the Rock. From between the turrets and the galleries of the citadel, globes of smoke, as if suddenly created, of a color like that of the pearl, pierced through with darting tongues of fire, and reflecting a white light from the rays of the sun, — rolled up in a thousand forms and shapes towards the sky, vanishing away in the azure atmosphere; then in a few seconds the peal rolled forward, and rebounding from the tranquil waves, it reëchoed on the rocks of the shore, and slowly died away in a faint rumbling sound, amidst the farthest recesses of the mountains. The Rock and the town, enveloped at times in smoke which was quickly dispersed by the sea-breeze, were mirrored in the green hue of the calm waters, and their inverted image was reproduced, flickering, but perfect, in the sea.

Wafted on by the wind, the sound was more or less strong according to the increasing or decreasing power of the breeze. In the stillness of the Monastery, even the shouts and the hurrahs of the spectators might, at times, be distinctly heard, as they cheered the Captain of Spain. But neither these tokens of festivity, nor the charming vista displayed before her eyes, could lift from Ginevra's soul the weight of sadness which oppressed it. A new sting, equally painful, was now added to that of remorse; the suspicion of being betrayed by him for whose sake she had made the immense sacrifice of disregarding the claims of duty and of conscience. Her mind repelled,

and her heart abhorred the doubt; but still there *was* a doubt. Whoever has tried it, let him tell how easy it is to expel it. And in fact, although there was no truth in her fears, still there existed circumstances which might give a semblance of reality to the foundation of her doubts.

Ettore had certainly succeeded in concealing from her the meeting with Graiano, but accustomed as he was to lay all his thoughts and secrets before her, he could not feign so well as not to let her perceive that there was lurking in his heart a secret of which she had not been made the confidant.

On the other hand the marked change in Zornis' manners was a thorn which she could not pluck from her heart. She would say to herself:—"Who will assure me that Ettore himself has not guessed? How can I be made sure that he does not encourage her?" And while she endeavored to draw a conclusion from all these premises, she found herself entangled in a labyrinth of doubts, without a thread to lead her out.

Distressed and fatigued with so much mental anguish, she rose to look for relief and comfort, and made inquiries about Zornis; she was not at home. She went to the garden; she was not there. She inquired of the few persons who had remained at the Monastery, but none could give her any information. An iron grasp almost palsied her heart, and a thousand shapeless suspicions crowded upon her mind. She then approached the tower by which the entry to the island is protected. She saw it deserted, and not one single man on guard; the *Conestabile* had gone to the jousts and his men had followed suit. She passed the bridge and kept on walking along the beach, with the sea at her right, and on the left the steepness of the mountain covered with heavy underwood. With a

weary step, and a mind overburdened with thoughts, she paid no attention to what was going on around her. But all at once she started at a rustling noise among the branches; and to her great terror, she saw emerging from it a man who, advancing with tottering steps, covered with rags, steeped in blood, torn by thorns and briars, and with long, unkempt, matted hair falling upon his face, approached her and fell on his knees. At first she thought of flying away, but naturally courageous and fearless, she stood still; and looking at the man who had appeared before her in that guise so strange, she recognized at length the chieftain Pietraccio, whom, following the plan laid by Don Miguel, she and Fieramosca had involuntarily set at liberty. The affair had turned out as Valentino's emissary had foreseen; whilst they were busy about the woman, Pietraccio had taken to his heels, run up stairs, and then through the gate, clearing his way with the stiletto he had in his hand; and, although wounded and chased by many, he had succeeded in gaining the woods, and being well acquainted with them, and a very swift runner, had saved himself. Not to fall in the hands of those who had been dispatched after him, he was obliged to live most miserably, hidden in the densest parts of the forest; and now finding himself near her, to whom he supposed he owed his freedom, and therefore had no reason to fear, goaded by hardship and hunger, he implored her compassion, making use of signs to make her understand his great misery, which however was evident in his very appearance. Ginevra felt both loathing and pity for the wretch, and bade him not to fear, — that at the Monastery there was no person but the nuns, and the tower being for that day abandoned, he might follow her to a wood-house under her quarters, where she would care for him.

The assassin, who peradventure felt that death would have been preferable to such a life, followed her, and reached the hiding-place without being seen by any person. The tender hearted woman brought him refreshments and bandaged the wound, which, however not very severe, still needed care, and with some straw prepared for him a couch as well as she could. As she was returning up stairs, Zorais and Gennaro had just landed from the skiff, returned from Barletta.

Ginevra could not refrain from making a mild complaint to the maiden who had left home in the morning without telling her.

"Dear Zorais! I have been very uneasy searching for thee all over the island; why not have told me that thou wert going?"

"Not to awake thee," was Zorais' reply; and the want of sincerity in the answer suffused her countenance with a slight vermilion tint, which Ginevra noticed; and then added: —

"I left very early with Gennaro, and . . ."

"And," interrupted Ginevra with a smile, "thou didst not know last night that thou wert going?"

Such direct thrust added a tint of spite to the shame which had already crimsoned Zorais' face: — "Yes . . . I had some idea of going." — Then, resuming the thread of her conversation: "Long since," she said, "I have wished to witness one of these jousts, and see whether they are in fact anything better than the Arabian festivals. But *viva Dio!* with us, what is here performed by knights and lords, would be done, beshrew me! by slaves, and none of our noblemen would jeopard his life for the amusement of three or four thousand spectators of the lowest rabble."

Ginevra, perceiving that Zornis, to avoid the necessity of giving an account of the motives she had in going to Barletta, insisted on talking about the lists, did not attempt to urge the matter any further, and remarked, "Then it was a fine tournament?"

"Fine? indeed it was!" chimed in Gennaro, who was dying with the wish of being himself the narrator of events, and beginning from the appearance of Gonzalo, he described to the best of his abilities, the splendor and gorgeousness of the barons; then, thinking it would gratify her, he continued, with a toss of the head and a pressure of the lips, while with his hand he twirled his cap in a hundred ways: "And if you had seen your brother! how he mounted his horse! a splendid colt, of the color of silver; it was on every tongue — what a handsome youth! — And to tell the truth, with that azure mantle of yours, he was quite a picture. I almost killed myself to follow the cavalcade out of the gates! By the power of my elbows, I assure you, truly . . . but when the daughter of Signor Gonzalo came out of her litter, I was as near to her as I am to you now; and Signor Ettore helped her on the saddle . . . that is, I'll say it more exactly, she leaned her foot on his knee, a little foot, see!" — and to show the exact measure of it, he extended the thumb of the right hand, with the fore-finger of the left pointing to its joint, — "and then up, like a cricket; and do you know what I am going to tell you? I should not think that she is displeased with your brother, if we judge from the way she acted after being on the saddle,—she spoke to him such fine words, she put on such looks! blessed are those who saw it! And he, I saw it, he blushed; the Lord knows what they have said to each other! and I thought to myself, it

would be queer if Signor Ettore should marry: they would be a very handsome pair, I tell you; they seem made for each other."

The reader can imagine whether this account with its comments could be grateful to Ginevra. She could bear it no longer, and wishing to get rid of him, said shortly:

"Well, well . . . you will tell me all some other time." And she turned around to retire to her rooms with Zorais. But Gennaro, who was in good earnest with his story, was not to be put off in that way, and continued:

"Eh, this is nothing! you ought to have been there during the jousts, in the balcony occupied by the folks of quality; he sat by her constantly, and they kept on talking continually; and then, Signora Zorais can tell you how they had attracted the attention of all. And in fact, the host of the Sun Tavern, he who provides the wines for the folks at the Rock, said that the father has consented to his marrying her; it would be a grand affair, you know! how many thousand of fine ducats! It would be far different from that hard life of his, always on horseback, exposed to the rain and to the wind."

Ginevra, to break up this conversation, which pained her too much, albeit she knew the hollowness of its meaning, said:

"But the tournament; will you tell me about the tournament, at last?"

"Oh, the tournament! There is no remembrance of the like in Barletta."

And here, starting with the bull-fight, and the prowess of Don Garcia, he went on describing the encounter with battle-axe and lance, repeating all the names loudly proclaimed by the heralds. His memory served him too well, when, drawing near to the end, he said:

"What crowned the feast, were the exploits of Signor Don Graiano d'Asti, who unsaddled the three Spaniards one after another."

"Who, who?" asked Ginevra, with an emotion in her manners, and a faltering in her voice, too violent to be suppressed.

"One Signor Don Graiano d'Asti; he must be a great baron, so rich and costly were his armor and housings."

"Graiano d'Asti, didst thou say? Was he great, or small? was he young? . . . how did he look?"

Gennaro had not missed one single jot of the arms, physiognomies and bearing of all the combatants, and he remembered Graiano as if he had him before his eyes, because the baron had entered the lists with raised vizor, and was seen full in his countenance, so that he could describe him most minutely; and he left not the least doubt in Ginevra's mind as to his identity with her husband. Nevertheless, she controlled herself so far as to conceal in part the violent tumult of feelings which overwhelmed her heart, and to avert the danger of betraying her secret. While Gennaro was doing his best to convey a correct picture of the form and features of the baron, she had time to recover herself; but perceiving that the two hearers had still remarked that she had faltered on hearing that name mentioned, to do away with any suspicion, she said, when the gardener had done speaking:

"Do not wonder that I feel disturbed at the mention of that name; some time ago strange occurrences took place between his house and ours; but they afterwards became reconciled, and for many years there has been no cause for scandal; but I was very far from thinking that he would be in Barletta now, and under French pay."

After saying this she turned to go to her rooms; but

Zorais and Gennaro could not but suspect, from the color of her countenance, which changed several times, that she was much pained by some secret and weighty thought; still they did not follow her; and when she had left, the gardener said to the maiden:

"Is she unwell? or have I said anything which was not proper?" Zorais had something else in her mind, and could not herself well define by what thoughts and by what suspicions she was haunted; hence she replied by a shrugging of her shoulders, and departed, wishing no less than her companion to be alone. Gennaro who had been left there, with cap in hand, grumbled as he went his way: — "They are all alike! great is the man who can understand them!" —

In the meantime Ginevra was going to her chamber by the private stairs, and she felt at every step as if the world were falling on her shoulders; she breathed with increasing difficulty, and the throbbing of her heart was so violent that she almost fainted. She incessantly repeated in almost a whisper: — "*O! Virgin Mother, help me!*" — and as the suffering increased she could only say: — "*my God! my God!*" — At last the pressure was such that her knees gave way, and having with great effort reached the fourth or fifth step, she could go no farther, and sank. With a breathing quick and broken, and her brow bathed in spasmodic perspiration, she thought: — I cannot live till to-morrow! — She had heard Zorais entering her own room, and she knew that the nuns were at rest in their cells, it being the warm hour of the afternoon; still the fear of being discovered in that place and in that state added to her discomfort; and to avoid the danger of it, she gave up the thought of going to her room, and resolved to go to the church

by the small gate of the cloister. She felt that only there she might hope to obtain relief and protection against the evils by which she was threatened. Thus she made her way to the church as best she could, at times leaning against the walls, and then endeavoring to walk as usual, if she happened to see some lay-sister loitering in the cloisters, or some nun's head peeping out of the window.

The church was deserted; she threw herself on the first step of the choir as she entered, and for a long while she remained in that posture with her head resting between her hands, and her elbows on her knees, trying to recover herself, and with her mind a prey to so many distracting thoughts, that it might actually be said she had none whatever.

Behind the high altar, eight or ten steps of marble led to a subterranean chapel, where five silver lamps burned night and day before a picture of the Mother of God, which a tradition from time immemorial reported to have been painted by Saint Luke. The wonders said to have been performed in that spot were the cause of building a church near the Monastery. The chapel was hexagonal, the shrine and the venerable image being opposite the entrance; at each angle a column surmounted by a capital made of foliage heavily carved in the olden style, supported one of the ridges which converged with the vault into a culminating slab, of the shape of a mill-stone, with a hole in the centre, protected by a grate, and opening in the upper church at the foot of the high altar. A slender ray of the sun, entering through the stained glasses of one of the large windows from the cupola of the church, worked its way to the subterranean chapel through that hole. That beam descended into

a darkness scarcely broken by the feeble and reddish glare of the lamps, and entering in the form of a cylinder, reproduced on the pavement the color of the windows and the shape of the grate. Ginevra fell on her knees at the foot of the altar, and as she was crossing that beam, the light reflected from the gloss of the azure dress she wore, illumined for a moment, like the flash of a pale lamp, the whole chapel.

With her hands closely clasped on her bosom, and her eyes fixed on the image, she began to pray, and she felt the beating of her pulse become more regular, and the heaving of her heart growing calmer by degrees. That prayer, not uttered by her lips, but issuing from the heart and expressing her feelings, restored peace and tranquility to the soul.

Like all ancient paintings, the countenance of that Madonna portrayed a certain sadness, so divine and so august, that the young woman felt as if she met with sympathy in her trials, and even, by keeping her eye riveted upon it, she imagined that she perceived a flashing in the eye, by which she was inspired with a holy terror. Still she felt comfort, and giving vent to her feelings, she cried: "Holy and glorious Virgin! who am I, to deserve mercy and pity from Thee? And still who shall help me, if Thou wilt not? Behold at Thy feet all my trials; see that I cannot bear them, and have no strength to free myself from them! O! Mother mine, most merciful, nerve my heart so that I may at last do what I wish!" And with her eyes continually riveted upon the image, and bathed in tears which streamed down her cheeks and her bosom, she remained for a long time thus placing herself under the protection of her who delights to be called the mother and comforter of the afflicted; and she felt from

her own experience how much comfort can still be obtained from heaven, when one has lost everything, even hope, on earth.

She recalled to mind all the hours of her past life, the innocent joys of childhood, the affections of youth, the first whispers of love, and its first remorses; then that torrent of trials and of griefs flooded upon her after she was married; — then she thought of how she had spent those latter years in continual vicissitudes of brief happiness — not even unalloyed — and so much bitterness, and scorching remorse. And now, moreover, as it happens at the end of a dream which vanishes like mist, she saw vanishing even the hope on which she had fed so long, that Ettore would never change his feelings for her. And when shaken by so many blows, wishing to follow the voice of God who called her, still not feeling resolution enough to yield to it, behold the divine will manifesting itself with a louder voice, and leading her to the road in which she was to walk, by revealing to her in a manner so unexpected the existence of her husband. — All doubts were now removed — she thought. — As long as I could persuade myself that he was living no more, I could perhaps excuse myself; but what a wretch I would prove to be if I continued so! —

But here a new obstacle presented itself: — And when I meet him, he will ask me: where hast thou been all this time? —

It was not so very easy to find an answer to that. This idea presented itself so forcibly, that she felt it would be impossible for her to meet the eyes of her judge, and she at once abandoned the idea entirely, and turned to some other way of getting out of that labyrinth. However, the more she reflected the stronger was the

feeling of duty that came over her, that the very step she wished not to take, was the only one she was bound to, — the only thing she could and ought to do; and she would say to herself: Of whom should I complain but of myself? Had I acted otherwise, and as I ought to have acted, I should not be obliged now to undergo this humiliation, so bitter; but the longer I put it off, the more bitter it will become.

The temper of Ginevra's soul was a strong one, and hence she loathed to be long time wavering in her resolution; and she courageously resolved — Can I live forever in this remorse? No. Can I refuse the hopes, and blunt the terrors of a future life? No. Therefore let me follow my duty, happen what may; the trials I am going to meet will be an atonement for my errors; and thou, my good Mother, thou wilt have mercy on me in this world and in the next. Should Graiano withdraw his pardon from me, what can he do? kill me? My immortal soul will take its flight towards God, and it will have in its power to offer deeds of penance, and deserve mercy and forgiveness.

After having poured forth her soul in a last most fervid prayer, she went to the upper church with a quick and firm step, thus feeling that she was, as it were, adding courage to herself, and closed herself in her room to make such preparations as would help to carry out her resolution. She sat, as it was her wont, on the balcony which overlooked Barletta, and began to muse. There was not a more propitious day to return to her husband, certain as she was to find him at the festivals in the Rock of Barletta, to which she might go in half an hour's travel by sea. If, on the contrary, she should wait until he had returned to the French camp, she would have to

meet a great many more obstacles. Hence she reasoned thus: Here there is no room for a doubt; I must be with him before to-morrow..... But how to arrange matters with Ettore! To-day he will not come, that is certain; to wait, I cannot; to leave the island, to abandon him, and not even let him know what has become of me, after I owe my life and so much else to him! Here a thought sprang up in her mind, worthy only of a soul so noble as hers.—If in leaving him, she thought, I let him know how my heart yearns after him, I know too well, that I shall make him miserable for life; but if, on the contrary, I go without acquainting him with my motives, he will think I am an ungrateful wretch; soon will the memory of so miserable a being like myself be erased from his mind..... She could not brook the thought; she sighed bitterly, and said—my sins are great, but these pains are even so horrible!

With that restless anxiety which is always felt when the soul undergoes some violent revulsion, she rose, and wiping her eyes with the back of her hand, began to put together the few articles she intended to carry with her. Rummaging in a chest, she came across some remnants of the azure mantle of Fieramosca, and of the silver thread with which it had been embroidered. We leave to the reader to imagine what feelings that sight gave rise to in Ginevra's heart.

The first impulse was to take them and stow them with the few articles she intended to take with her; but on a second thought, she put them back in the same place, and said—No!.... every recollection of him must be cancelled, and forever; it will be enough for me here below to know that he is happy on my account.

She wrote to the Abbess, thanking her for the hospi-

table kindness bestowed upon her, and recommending her friend; told her that a reason of great importance constrained her to depart without taking leave, and she hoped to be very soon in a place whence she could give her a more detailed and satisfactory account of herself.

Having thus fulfilled this last duty, she had nothing else to do in the Monastery; but she did not wish to start before night. It was then one hour before sunset, and she resigned herself to wait patiently on the balcony. But she could not have chosen a more trying manner of spending her time. If she turned her eyes to the interior of the room, the sight of the little bundle she had laid on the table, and which was to keep her company in a journey of so much anxiety, gave her a foretaste, as it were, of keen troubles. If she looked at the bed, made up as usual by the lay-sister, she would think that she had occupied it the night before for the last time, and only God knew where she would pillow her head the night following. Outside the balcony it was even worse. She looked over that span of the sea which separated her from the Rock of Barletta, and then she would think of all those evenings, when straining her eyes she descried the little boat of Fieramosca advancing from the shore, like a black dot on the waters. She was now about sailing over the same waters; but to what purpose? . . .

CHAPTER XIV.

While Ginevra, in this torture of mind, longed for, and at the same time feared the approach of night, Pietraccio, hidden in the woodhouse under her rooms, was waiting for her with feelings both of suspicion and impatience, hoping that she would come at twilight to show him the way of escaping unobserved.

The scanty light which made its way into that hole came from a high window which opened on a level with the ground, and looked over a deserted place in the back part of the monastery, covered all over with briars and nettles, where it seemed that no man would ever step his foot. The robber was frightened as he heard some steps advancing through those bushes, and his fears were greatly quickened when he saw a man approaching whom he recognized at once. It was the Conestabile of the tower. He would have chosen to hide himself among the fagots, but fearing lest the rustling of the dry leaves might betray him, he kept quiet where he was, even holding his breath; but he distinctly overheard the conversation which passed between the Conestabile and a man who accompanied him.

Martino began: "There, that window on the second story, where you see a cage and a flower-pot; as you see, you can reach it even without a ladder by the grate

of the window on the first floor without trouble. Well, ... when you are up, you will find yourself in an entry with many doors in it; but, mark it well, the first on the left is the room of my lady. However, there is none else in the strangers' quarters. At one o'clock all the nuns are in bed. If you know how to go to work, you can come here at three and carry away the guest, and be already a mile off before they can think of you. I will shut up the dogs. I have given leave of absence to my men; and I assure you that whoever wants them to-night will have to drum them out of the taverns of Barletta. So you are now satisfied; but take care, and say to that devil of your associate that he must look after his own business, — that I do not intend to forfeit the provisions I get from the Abbess for the barter of a few florins; therefore, look out sharp; because if you make a botch of it, I have already taken every precaution to throw the whole blame on you all, and have my shoulders safe. A clear bargain makes friends dear. *Patti chiari, amici cari.*"

Boscherino, to whom all these words had been addressed, lightly pulling one of the moustaches of the Conestibile by one end, answered him, with a shake of his head, thus: —

"To throw the dirty water on him for whom we embark in this undertaking, you will have to throw it very high, and it will need a stronger arm than thine. And you may thank San Martino that the Castle of Barletta is far off, and a certain wight staying there cannot hear thee, because, I tell thee, although we are in April now he would make thee feel it was January. Follow my advice, brother; of this whole affair, whether we succeed or not, the less thou shalt say, the better for thee."

Martino had partaken of Gonzalo's dinner at Barletta, and had imbibed so much that he felt lion-hearted, and answered, without being intimidated: —

"And I say to you again that I have not the least fear in the world, and if I have consented to lend you a hand in this undertaking, I have done it more because it is customary between soldiers to give each other a lift, than for the paltry sum of a few ducats; and I feel not disposed to break my neck and lose my bread for whomsoever I know not; so I will tell you in plain words, — be careful, because, if you are detected, I know how to get out of a scrape; and let the man who orders this exploit be whosoever he may, I'll laugh at him when I am in my tower. So we understand each other. — Fare thee well."

Having said this much, he went to the tower, leaving Boscherino to survey the place at his own ease. The latter allowed him to go, casting after him a smile of compassion, and then he could not refrain from saying in a tone of voice loud enough to be heard by Pietraccio: —

"What a miserable ass! Just think, he will measure himself with Cesare Borgia! He would have met the man who would quench his thirst by giving him salt pork to eat! Of course, it is a pint of Alicante that talks within him now."

These words, as well as the whole preceding dialogue, were heard, and very closely listened to, by the assassin; and they were enough to make him reach the conclusion, that by order of Valentino the abduction of his protectress had been planned, and that the Duke was then in the Rock of Barletta. We may believe, without fear of doing any wrong to Pietraccio, that the idea of defending the lady was not his paramount thought; what did he know of gratitude? But the hope of baffling a plan of

the greatest enemy of his mother and of himself, a more atrocious hope that in the midst of the crowd and in the tumult of the festivities, he might meet him, and imbrue his hands in his blood, made his heart rebound with joy. When Boscherino, after a few minutes, had gone, he rose from the place where he was, and taking from his bosom the thin and sharp stiletto received from Don Miguel, he felt its blade with the thumb, gnashing his teeth, and inflicting an imaginary stab: and then he thought of the manner by which he could safely go to Barletta.

The *Angelus* at the Monastery had been tolled; after the lapse of half an hour, slowly creeping to the ground above, he opened the door, and looked around to see if the shore was clear; but, to regain the main land, he did not dare to pass under the tower, nor over the bridge; and reflecting that the tract of sea between the island and the shore — of about a hundred yards — would afford to him a more protected passage, he went down the steps, and when near the water, undressed himself, made a bundle of his clothes, which he fastened on his head, and then swam across; in a few minutes, without being seen or heard, he found himself on the sand of the beach. It was almost dark; and having dried himself and dressed in a hurry, he hastened on his way towards the city.

Diego Garcia di Paredes had scarcely settled the quarrel which had arisen between him and the Frenchman out of the wonderful feat he had performed against the bull, when he remembered that Gonzalo had intrusted him with a duty of great importance, and hurried away from the lists. He had been charged with the superin-

tendence of the preparations for a very sumptuous dinner which had been ordered at the Castle. As there was no time to lose, he repaired to the kitchen at once; and as the grudge and bad humor he had against La Motte was still souring within him, he appeared before the cooks and attendants, who were bustling in the kitchen, like one who was not disposed to overlook any fault or mishap of those under his surveillance.

"And so!" he said, halting on the threshold, with his arms folded on his breast, "will everything be soon in order? Dinner must be on the table in less than one hour."

The head-cook, a huge lump of a man, portly and broad-shouldered, was at the middle table spitting venison, with that frowning look which all men of his station in life put on in like circumstances, no matter whether things are wrong or not. But he had an additional cause for being in ill-humor. The fuel had all been consumed; hence, besides the fact that the fires could not be kept up at the same degree, and, consequently, the meats could not be properly cooked, there was still greater danger that the dinner might not be ready at the appointed hour, and could not be placed on the table, either good or bad; and whoever is acquainted with the feeling of pride which swells the breast of a cook, so tender in a point of honor, will easily imagine how harassed was the mind of the man to whom the Spaniard addressed himself. He would not have honored the Pope with an answer in that very moment, but he felt bound to answer Paredes.

He raised his head, and brandishing the spit with an air of vexation, he said: "The devil has his horns here, Signor Don Diego. . . . That traitor of a major-domo has allowed the wood to give out. I have sent as many

of these poltroons as I could get rid of to obtain wood wherever they might, but d— them all, none has as yet returned;" and he stopped, giving that sort of sigh, or rather puff, expressive of the feelings of those who are disposed to give up entirely.

"Wood or no wood," shouted Paredes, "*Voto a Dios*, that if thou art not ready for the appointed hour, . . . *majadero, harto de ajos* . . .;" and he went on spinning a whole thread of Spanish imprecations, addressed to the cook, who lost all his forbearance, and replied:—

"*O Eccellenza!* tell me how I can cook a dinner without fire. . . ."

Diego Garcia was not of those strong-headed men who will browbeat a weaker man because he happens to be on the side of right; hence the answer of the cook at first made him more angry; but then seeing that he was not altogether wrong, he said:—

"And where has this thief of a major-domo absconded?" and not waiting for an answer, he turned his shoulders on the cook, went up to the court-yard again, and thundered:—"Izquierdo, Izquierdo, *maldito de Dios!* . . ."

Izquierdo had run to the nearest wood-house, and with the help of the kitchen-waiters, having laden some puny donkeys, he was urging them on with the tune of heavy blows, and was entering the court-yard when he heard the voice that called him; he doubled the blows on their backs to make it appear that the poor asses were to be blamed, at least in part, for the delay; and heaven only knows what they should be blamed for!

As he came near Paredes he began to apologize; but the latter broke him short,—

"Hurry, — quick, — less talk, — down with the wood, or I'll measure it by the length of your back."

The way from the court-yard to the kitchen was as follows: — After ascending three steps, a narrow and dark passage led to a smaller yard, in the centre of which was an open space, flanked by a low wall; from the bottom of this, winding stairs led to the entrance to the kitchen. Garcia was stamping his foot in great impatience, seeing how long it would take the knaves to carry the wood in their arms. Thinking that there would be far too much delay in the operation, he became restless, and stooping under the belly of one of those animals, he uplifted it with its burden, and taking hold of the hind and fore-feet as if they had belonged to a lamb, he carried it to the edge of the low wall and turned it over in a bundle, the donkey falling on top of the load, heels over head; and with the same fury, taking hold of the second and third, he repeated the same game; so that in that hole, not very large, could be seen, all thrown in a heap, a mass of wood and fagots, with snouts, ears, and legs of asses, bruised and scarred, cutting most ludicrous antics; and the waiters, frightened out of their wits, endeavoring to free them, pick up the wood and throw it in the kitchen. The terror which Garcia had inspired was so great that even the master-cook came out and gave them help, now and then cautiously looking up for fear that the shower of donkeys should still continue, and anxious to escape from it. In the twinkling of an eye, the ovens were cracking with the addition of fuel, and the impulse which Paredes had given by that summary argument, had been so powerful that every man did the work of three. As he became satisfied that everything was in a

fair way, shaking the dust off his clothes, and still grumbling, he moved towards home to dress himself. In the yard, he met the company just returning from the lists. Gonzalo, the Duke of Nemours, the ladies, and the barons had arrived in time to see the last of the donkeys on the shoulders of Diego Garcia, and hearing what had happened, with great merriment and many jokes, they made way for the Spanish baron, and entering the halls, they loitered about, waiting for the dinner hour.

The banquet was to be served in the hall which was used for a drawing-room to Gonzalo's quarters. It was about one hundred feet long; and in it a large table was laid, in the form of a horseshoe, which could seat about three hundred guests. At the upper part of the hall, at the farthest point from the door, and at the head of the table, were placed four large, high-backed chairs, covered with velvet, and ornamented with galloons of gold, destined for the Duke of Nemours, Gonzalo, Donna Elvira, and Vittoria Colonna. Over their heads were hung from the walls the gonfalons of Spain, the banners of the Colonnas, and the pennants of the army, — all admirably interwoven with trophies, composed of the costliest and most brilliant armor, with gaudy plumes surmounting the helmets, with so many ornaments, and so much jewelry, that there never was a more splendid sight. From holes left on the spacious table at equal distances, emerged orange trees, myrtles and young palm-trees, all covered with blossoms and fruits; while jets of water, clear and cool, spouting from under them, fell into silver basins, wherein swam fish of a hundred colors. Little birds, tied by invisible horsehairs, frisked on the branches; and being domesticated and reared in cages, warbled their lively songs, without being afraid of

the company or of the noise. An immense sideboard, behind the place reserved for the noblest of the guests, was laden with vases of silver, and gilt plate, wrought with beautiful reliefs of arabesque design; and before it, the steward sat on a high stool, with his ebony wand, beckoning to servants and waiters. In the centre of the hall were placed two large ewers of bronze, filled with water for the purpose of washing or rinsing, and were of that style we see painted by Paolo Veronese, in his suppers; within them decanters of Spanish and Sicilian wines were kept to cool. On the two sides of the hall, near the walls, were erected platforms about ten feet from the ground, which were occupied by the musicians. Owing to the diligence of Diego Garcia and of the cook, shortly after mid-day the steward could enter the hall where the company was waiting, and, attended by fifty waiters dressed in russet and yellow, offer ewers and towels to wash their hands; and it was announced that dinner was ready. The Duke of Nemours in the radiant beauty of his youth, and health, with that graceful address which so exclusively belongs to the French nation, offered to Lady Elvira his hand, to lead her to her place. Oh! for the man who would have then told this young prince, who seemed destined for a future of great deeds and of glory, that within a few days those eyes so brilliant, those limbs so gracefully proportioned, would be stiff and cold, laid out on a poor bier in the small church of Barletta; * and that a passing office of

* "1503, April 28. At the battle of Cerignola, a shot from one of the Spanish arquebusiers took effect on the unfortunate young nobleman, and he fell mortally wounded from his saddle.

. . . "Gonzalo was affected even to tears at beholding the mutilated remains of his young and gallant adversary, who, whatever judgment may be formed of his capacity as a leader, was allowed to

compassion from Gonzalo, would be the last expression of feeling he would raise in a human heart! . . . .

Gonzalo took his seat between Vittoria Colonna and the Duke, beckoning to his daughter to sit at the right of the latter, with Fieramosca on her side; and the banquet commenced. Ettore's manners towards Lady Elvira were marked by so much courtesy during the whole day, that the Spanish maiden, whose heart was very susceptible, could not help being fascinated by them; and much more so as she heard from every lip the praises of him who thus behaved towards her. Seated near each other at table, they continued their conversation, full of merriment; but the countenance of the Italian by degrees became veiled, as it were, by a cloud; his answers grew less earnest; at last they showed that he did not understand what was said to him. Lady Elvira glanced at him with a furtive look, and with an expression of doubt mixed with some impatience; observing that he grew pale, and that, lowering his eyes, he seemed lost in suspense, she almost persuaded herself that she was the cause of the change. This thought rendered her more indulgent; and she kept silent too. They both remained thus for some time, while the rest of the company were in a high glee, and the noise was great all around. Elvira, however, flattered herself too much; the sadness of Fieramosca arose from a far different source, for it was the effect of fortuitous circumstances. From the place where he sat he could see through the two main windows of the hall; they were parted in the

have all the qualities which belong to a true knight . . . Gonzalo ordered his remains to be conveyed to Barletta, where they were laid in the cemetery of the convent of St. Francis."—*Prescott's Ferd. and Isab.* ch. xii.

middle by two slender Gothic columns, and had been left wide open to allow a free ventilation of the sea-breeze through the hall, the day being exceedingly warm. He could see the whole expanse of the waters, and emerging from them Mount Gargano, dressed in that beautiful sky-colored green generally reflected by the mountain in a pure and serene Italian noon. Half way between the mountain and the town arose the little island and the Monastery of Sant' Orsola; and even the piazza of Ginevra, shaded by its vine tree, could be discerned like a dark speck on the reddish façade of the guests' quarters. On this foreground, so solemn and so charming, the dark form of Graiano rested in bold relief, having his place between the window and Ettore's seat.

That sky rendered the color of his complexion more fiery and red, and added coarseness to the unmeaning expression of his countenance. The thought of what sort of a man he had before him, made Fieramosca's blood boil with rage. However, it was happy for him not to know in what painful state Ginevra was at that very hour! At that moment she had learned from Gennaro that Graiano was in Barletta, and she was staggering into the chapel to take her formal resolution to abandon the place forever.

In the uproar of so large a banquet, little or no attention was paid to Ettore and the Lady Elvira; but Vittoria Colonna, who had already some suspicions, noticing the change in the countenance of the two young friends, and apprehending that some conversation of more close import might have taken place, held her mind in suspense, and her eyes on the alert, watching the actions of the knight and of his fair companion, for whom she could not help feeling greatly alarmed. Meanwhile, the

banquet was progressing, and the tables groaned under that quality and variety of good cheer which was so abundantly served up in those old times. The culinary art is certainly a difficult one in our own days; but it was much more so then; for a cook, on occasions like this, was expected to perform wonders, such as our cooks would not even dream of. Not only the palate was to be pleased with every dish, but the eye was also to be amused. A large peacock, with the rich and varied colors of its spreading tail, stood before Gonzalo; it had been prepared without taking any of the plumes off, and it was done so skilfully that it seemed to be alive. Fowls of smaller size surrounded the noble bird, and had their heads turned upwards gazing at it; they were all stuffed with spices and flavor. A quantity of pastry and pies of enormous height was placed at different places on the tables; and at a given signal from the steward's truncheon, all the covers were uplifted, as if by magic, and from the centre of the pies arose as many dwarfs, appearing from their breasts upwards, dressed in the most ludicrous attire, with silver spoons distributing around the contents of the pastry, while their left hands scattered flowers over the guests. The confectionery dishes were framed either in the shape of low mounds, on the top of which stood plants, laden with candied fruits; or in that of small lakes of jellies, on which little barks, made of sugar, and completely rigged, had been set adrift, laden with a tempting freight of sugar-plums, and other such knick-knacks. Others represented an Alpine mountain, with a volcano on its top; and the vapor issuing was a compound of most delicious fragrance. The mountain being opened, the guests found chestnuts and other fruits slowly roasting on the gentle flames

of aquardente. Among the great variety of wild meats there was a small boar, with the skin well preserved; and there it stood with affrighted appearance, in the midst of a band of hunters, made of pastry, who assailed him with their spears. A blow from the knife showed to the company that it was deliciously cooked. The hunters shared the fate of their prey, being quartered and distributed, with slices of the venison, on the guests' plates. When the banquet was drawing to a close, four pages, in red and yellow checks, entered the hall, mounted on four white horses, and supporting an immense platter, on which lay a huge long tunny, which they placed before Gonzalo, amidst the acclamations of all, admiring the size of the fish, and the manner in which it had been prepared. It carried on its back the figure of a naked youth, with lyre in hand, made to represent Arion of Methymna. Gonzalo presented a knife to the Duke of Nemours, with a courteous request that he would open the mouth of the fish.

The Duke did so, and out came many doves, that went flying around the hall, as they were liberated from their prison. This joke took all by surprise, and was received with shouts; but as the birds alighted here and there, the guests perceived some jewel and a small card, with a name on it, hanging from the neck of each.

The company at once perceived that the Captain of Spain had contrived that amusing way for the purpose of presenting his guests with tokens of his kindness; and it was an exciting sight to see the confusion into which they were thrown, every one endeavoring to catch a dove; but when one was secured, the name was read and the dove and token were presented to the person to whom they belonged.

Fanfulla of course joined in the chase. A dove was flying by with the Lady Elvira's name on the little paper, and he was enabled to read it. Being exceedingly smitten with the beauty of the lady, he took it into his head to secure the prize, and enjoy the pleasure of presenting it. So, watching the bird, and being endowed with great agility, he managed so fortunately as to take the dove; and opening his way through the crowd, bent one knee before the Lady Elvira, and offering the bird, he called her attention to the brooch of very large and most beautiful diamonds, which was hanging from its neck.

The Lady Elvira, with a gracious smile, accepted the dove, and bringing it near her cheek to caress it, the frightened bird flapped its wings so as to discompose the blond hair which fell in ringlets over the snow-like face of the maiden, tinged with an incarnate color by the mishap. While she was endeavoring to detach the jewel from the dove's neck, Fanfulla rose, and said: —

"I believe there are no richer diamonds than these in the world; but, my Lady, to place them by your eyes will only dishonor them."

A smile of complacency was the reward Fanfulla received for his courteous address.

Some of my readers, accustomed perhaps to the formal restraints which modern civilization has put on every kind of social intercourse, will think, within himself, that this compliment was rather double distilled. Let him, therefore, reflect, that even for a man of arms of the sixteenth century, and for a hair-brained fellow like that youth of Lodi, it was certainly going too far; but whatever I may say in his excuse, the best apology for him is

that the daughter of Gonzalo thought he had spoken only what was elegant and true.

But Fanfulla felt envy and spite when the Lady Elvira, after having very closely examined and admired the clasp, turned to Fieramosca, and placing a large pin of gold in his hand, requested him to fasten it on her waist. Vittoria Colonna, who was near by, gravely advanced to perform that office with her own hands; and Ettore, feeling annoyed at the indiscretion of the request of the Lady Elvira, was in the act of returning the pin; but Elvira, who was whimsical and testy, like all children who have always had over-indulgent parents, interposed, and spoke to Fieramosca, with an air which ill concealed her vexation, thus:—

"Are you so much accustomed to wield the sword that you disdain to hold a pin in your hands for even one moment?" The Italian had to comply. Vittoria Colonna turned away, plainly showing in her handsome and noble countenance how far she would be from employing any of these devices; and Fanfulla, throwing a glance at Fieramosca, said:—

"Thou art born in luck; others sow and thou reapest;" and went away whistling an air, as if he were alone in the streets, and not in the midst of such company.

But Gonzalo's gifts were not all reserved only for the ladies; he had provided for the guests from the French camp; and the Duke of Nemours, as well as his barons, received costly presents of rings, woven pieces of golden wire as ornaments for their caps, and other articles. The great Captain had a good reason for so much display; he wished to make the French understand that not only he had plenty to provide his troops with, but he had even a surplus to spend in gallant entertainments.

knight, save his allegiance to the *l*
The damsel accepted the offer, and ans
courtesy. After a mutual and prolo
each other in the cup, and quaffing
health of one another, Gonzalo rose f
which movement all followed him, and
cony looking over the sea, to spend in
the few hours which remained before
day.

CHAPTER XV.

In every fortress of the olden times, a large hall was always built on the ground-floor, to serve for a place of resort where the men-at-arms would gather together. In the hall which had been built for this purpose, in the citadel of Barletta, a theatre, somewhat of the same kind as those built now-a-days, was temporarily erected for the day to which our story refers; it was not very unlike those which are seen in our time, with the only difference that with us the curtain is generally hoisted up, while with them it was lowered down, and let fall on the place where musicians now sit. They had secured the services of an itinerant troupe, from one of the neighboring towns on the sea-shore. The company had been performing at Venice during the carnival, and they were now going from place to place, giving dramas and comedies on their way to Naples for the festivals of San Gennaro, and to Palermo for those of Santa Rosalia. Being engaged to appear on this occasion before an audience so select, the troupe had taken great pains to have every thing ready in the best style. It was scarcely night, when the spectators were all seated, and the signal was given to begin the performance. A clumsy canvas, which served the purpose of a curtain, having been lowered, the spectators saw a platform, on one side of which was erected a portico ornamented with statues and columns, and appeared to be the entrance into a court; and on the entablature

was written in letters of gold, "LAND OF BABYLON." There sat on a throne, surrounded by his magnates, a king with a golden sceptre, dressed in oriental style, wearing an immense turban covered with jewels, and surmounted by a crown; the centre of the stage was intended to represent a sea-shore; and on the opposite side appeared a cavern, opening under the rock of an Alpine mountain crowded with trees and crags, and from its entrance a dragon issuing from time to time, looking as if he was guarding a goat's fleece with golden hair wonderfully shining that hung from a tree near by.

A woman, tall, stout, and of handsome features, sat by the king on a lower throne; she had on a dress of red satin, with a trail six feet long, and on her shoulders a large cape of black velvet, after the French fashion; at her side, a scythe took the place of a scimitar, and she held in her hand a book and a wand. It was Medea.

In a few moments a vessel came up to the shore, and a crowd of young men, in military dress, were landed; one of them, exceedingly handsome, was covered all over with steel and coat-of-mail, except the head. He was Jason; two young Moors carried his helmet and buckler.

He advanced, and having made a deep obeisance to the king, he began an address in rhymed verses, which did not sound very harmonious to Vittoria Colonna, and, I think, will not much please my readers. He began thus: —

Di Cristianità venemo,
Argonauti se chiamemo,
Al Soldan di Babilona,
Che Dio salvi sua corona.

We come from Christendom,
We are called Argonauts,
We come to the Sultan of Babylon,
May God preserve his crown.

And he went on in this strain, telling how they had come to take away the golden fleece. The king Æetes, having held counsel with his courtiers, and with his daughter, replied that he was pleased with their enterprise, and left Jason alone with Medea.

Jason immediately began to make love to the damsel, and begged her aid, promising that he would bring her to Christendom, where he would marry her, and make a great queen of her. Medea very readily yielded, and instructed him how to use certain incantations, with which it would be easy to stupefy the dragon; cautioning him, however, not to use the name of Saints, or make the sign of the cross, as in that case the charms would become powerless. She then left him. Jason, turning to his companions, protested that it was not fair and just for a good knight to conquer the dragon with sorceries, and therefore he would try at first to overcome it with his arms; and brandishing the sword, and covering himself with the shield, which one of the squires handed to him, while another clasped his helmet, he advanced to attack the dragon. But the savage beast, rushing from the cavern and belching flames, defended itself so well, that Jason had to give it up after a contest of a few minutes. His brothers in arms, with much earnestness, conjured him to employ the incantations, by which he easily succeeded in stupefying the beast, and took the fleece down without much ado. This being accomplished, Medea reappeared, urging them to go on board the vessel with her. On that, a great noise arose from the land; it was the sound of trumpets, and timbrels, clarions, and other Moorish instruments. During a pause in the music, a young man on horseback, dressed in Saracenic style, rushed upon the shore, and challenged

Jason, who took up the gauntlet, and with a few masterly blows laid him slain on the ground. But when he was repairing to his ship, Æetes made his appearance, surrounded by his barons, and seeing his daughter in the vessel with sails set, and his son Absyrtus murdered, ordered his men to prevent the flight of the Argonauts. Then Medea began her incantations; the air was enveloped in darkness, and a troop of men, in most outlandish attire, looking like demons, running to and fro with blazing torches, set fire to Babylon, which was instantly consumed. In that tumult, the king, as well as all his barons, were carried away by the Argonauts, who were seen in the distance sailing away in safety with their booty, and the performance was over.

If any of our readers should be of that class who forever praise the art and mechanism displayed in the modern theatre, I wish them to pause a moment, and reflect that the talent, which in our days is so skilfully employed to draw applause from the spectators, and which generally consists in arranging matters so that the whole performance must necessarily wind up with a conflagration, or a catastrophe, with Olympus or Erebus looming at a distance, — does not entirely belong to our age, but was employed in the management of the scenes, and was highly appreciated by the public of the sixteenth century.

The company before whom this performance was enacted, although composed of persons not devoid of education, was satisfied, or at least appeared to be. And to tell the truth, if we take into consideration the abilities of those players, and the place where they were obliged to perform, they achieved even more than could be reasonably expected. But that portion of the guests, that were

not allowed to mingle with the noblemen and the knights, were enjoying another spectacle of a similar nature, got up expressly for them in the court-yard, and certainly it was far more appreciated if we should judge from the shouts of applause which rent the air.

Some Spanish soldiers had obtained leave to perform as well as they could a national comedy in their own language; for this purpose they had set apart a corner of the yard, and therein with planks and curtains had made a temporary structure, (they called it a theatre,) and had been rehearsing for several days, every one endeavoring to commit to memory and personate his part in the best manner. They had succeeded in putting together a comedy very acceptable to the Spaniards, called *Las Mocedades del Cid*, which literally means the *Tricks of the Cid*, or more properly his youthful capers; after the comedy, if there was time left, they were to perform a *Saynete* by way of *petite pièce*, as the French call it.

Both the drama in the hall of the castle, and the comedy in the court-yard, were commenced at the same time. A large concourse of people crowded before the stage erected for the latter performance: squad-drillers, officers, soldiers, townsmen, and people from the suburbs, shopkeepers, and an infinite rabble. The aristocracy of this class occupied reserved seats near the platform, and as the *radii* of this crowd reached out from this centre, the ranks were swollen by individuals of lower grades, and of meaner appearance; until, at the outskirts, there were none to be seen but ragamuffins and ragged boys. Admittance was free; hence, no end to the concourse; and if the distance prevented many from enjoying the amusement, those who were at the farthest end, by way

of compensation, shouted and hissed, clapped their hands, and encored at random, to the great annoyance of those nearer, who gave vent to their ill-repressed vexation by repeating the word *Zitto* (hush), which was heard from one side or another, and which, instead of stilling the noise, added new stimulus to the vociferations.

Amidst that motley crowd, so absorbed in their enjoyment, a man could be seen hovering around, — a man of abject appearance and wretched garments, but whose countenance and bearing distinguished him from the rest of the people. His restless and anxious moving to and fro indicated that some motive far different from that of seeking pleasure had led him thither. It was Pietraccio. He had come to the Rock for the purpose of killing Valentino, and to warn Fieramosca of the danger of Ginevra; but finding himself in the midst of that multitude, he became perplexed, perceiving how difficult it was for him to find those he was looking for. The reader, perhaps, will be astonished to find an assassin, for whose head a price had been offered, daring to come to the city and exposing himself to the danger of being discovered; and certainly, if we should judge from the state of society in our days, nothing would have been more dangerous than to place himself within the power of gendarmes who were watching over the security of the public. But such dangers did not encompass a man like Pietraccio in those times; and on that occasion, when the excitement of the people and the anxiety of his own mind, consequent on the murder of the Podesta, had died away, he might feel as perfectly secure in Barletta, (especially as it was night,) as if he had been among his comrades in the bushes. But no matter how perilous was the undertaking in which he had embarked, he is too

well accustomed to get out of difficulties, he is thirsting for vengeance, and he will find the way to surmount all obstacles. Let us leave him to take care of himself, and go back to the principal actors of our history.

It was very near two o'clock in the night, when, the performances of the theatre being over, the company had repaired to the banquet room, which by that time had been already transformed into a dancing hall, and was illumined by wax lights arranged all around on large candelabra hanging from the walls, and on chandeliers hanging from the centre of the ceiling. The musicians were at the same places in open balconies, at one third of the distance between the floor and the entablature. Besides the musicians, who occupied one side, the place was crowded with persons of inferior rank, who wished to witness a spectacle in which they could not take part.

Gonzalo, with his guest and the ladies, sat on a dais raised near the wall on the side where the banners and standards hung. As the hall became filled, the Duke of Nemours rose, and opened the dance with the Lady Elvira.

When they had regained their seats, Fieramosca, wishing to show his courtesy even on this occasion, advanced to offer his hand to the maiden, protesting however his ignorance of the art of dancing; she accepted the offer with marked pleasure. Then other couples were made; and Fanfulla, among the rest, being unable to engage the Lady Elvira, made choice of the one whom he thought to be the handsomest woman of Barletta, and contrived to place himself so that, in the contra-dance, he should find himself face to face with Ettore and his partner. His endeavors to watch every movement of the Lady Elvira, and to catch all the *beaux-mots* she wafted to

Ettore, must have had a souring effect on his heart; for the excited looks of the Spanish maiden betrayed too well her liking for Fieramosca. The flourishes of the band, the exercise, the repeated grasping of the hand, and the familiarity which dancing allows between persons who in other walks of life would demean towards one another with the utmost reserve, had created in the daughter of Gonzalo an excitement of imagination which she could not well suppress. Both Ettore and Fanfulla had noticed it; it was a cause of pain to the former, and of jealousy to the latter. Fanfulla kept up an incessant fire, tormenting Fieramosca either with broken expressions or malicious glances. Ettore did not relish such jokes, and the half serious, half melancholy looks with which he received the railleries of his friend were interpreted by the Lady Elvira in a fashion of her own, very far from their real meaning.

At last the Lady Elvira, with that rash imprudence which was so prominent a feature in her character, taking the opportunity of an instant in which she was holding Ettore by the hand, leaned towards him and whispered in his ear: "When the ball is over, I will be in the balcony over the sea; come there, I wish to speak to you."

Ettore was painfully surprised at these words, which only portended the approach of a serious intrigue, and hummed a kind of consent with a nod of the head and a slight change in his countenance, but gave no decisive answer. Whether it was from want of precaution when the Lady Elvira whispered those words in Ettore's ears, or because Fanfulla was too much on the alert, the fact is that he also heard those ill-fated words, and cursing in his own heart the good luck which was all on the side of Fiera-

mosca, he muttered to himself:—"can't I make this giddy girl pay for it?"

Ettore for his part was a prey to contending thoughts. He did not feel the least inclined to yield to the charms of the handsome Spaniard; for in the first place the image of Ginevra was too deeply graven in his heart; and then he was too wise a man to think for a moment of making sport of the daughter of Gonzalo. And in truth with those arts she could never reach Ettore's heart, because he was not one of those men who are always ready to grasp an opportunity in these matters. But, on the other hand, he could not brook the idea of being thought uncourteous, unfeeling, or even worse; as, unfortunately, it is one of the contradictions of the world to brand certain acts as bad, and at the same time to give the name of fool and coward to those who will not be guilty of them. During the rest of the dance he tortured his mind to contrive some means by which he might get out of the difficulty honorably; at last the time for the rendezvous was drawing near, he made up his mind resolutely that he would not expose himself to do the least thing which might wrong Ginevra. And reflecting that while he was in the midst of so much enjoyment, she was in a lonely Monastery in the midst of the sea, left alone by everybody, and very probably thinking only of him, his heart burned with shame that he should have, even for a moment, entertained a regard for anything else above her love; therefore, as soon as he had concluded his dance with the Lady Elvira, anxious to hasten away from the hall, he thought to offer for an apology one of those headaches, which, in the sixteenth century, were as admirable an excuse as they are on many occasions even in the nineteenth.

The young gentlemen, who had taken part in the contra-dance, following the custom of the times, for the purpose of being more free in motion, had taken off the mantles they wore on the left shoulder and deposited them all together in a room adjoining the hall, and made their appearance in doublets and tights, which generally were of white satin. Fanfulla and Ettore were both dressed in this fashion, and their height as well as their dress made them appear much alike; only by putting on their mantles, a difference might be perceived; Fieramosca wore one of azure color embroidered with silver, Fanfulla's was vermilion.

Ettore met Diego Garcia, and requested him to offer to Gonzalo and his daughter his regrets because of a severe headache which constrained him to retire; and he repaired to the room where he had left his mantle. As he was crossing the threshold, the crowd having given way a little, he had no one close to his person, and he felt a blow on his shoulder as if some heavy object had fallen from above; looking to his feet, where the thing had fallen in rebounding, he saw a bit of paper in which something weighty had been wrapped. He looked up to the balcony whence it seemed to have fallen, but he discovered no person's eye looking down towards him. He was going forward; however, he stooped, picked up the parcel, and, unfolding it, he found that it contained a pebble for the purpose of giving it weight, that it might fall to the intended spot. There was written in a rude and scarcely readable hand:—"The Lady Ginevra will be abducted from Sant' Orsola by order of Duca Valentino at the stroke of three o'clock. He who warns you will wait for you, with three companions, at the large gate of the Castle, and he will have a javelin in his hand."

Ettore's frame shivered to the very marrow, and the thrill was increased by remembering that the clock had already struck half-past two. There was no time to lose. With a countenance as pale as that of the man who, mortally wounded, bounds on his last steps and falls to die, he was at the door with the rapidity of the lightning, then down the stairs at a ruinous speed, without mantle or cap, to the greatest amazement of all who saw him, he reached the place of rendezvous with such a fury that he had to hold on to the huge iron ring of the gate to stop himself. The vault of the entry was very dark; and, while panting from running and anxiety, he looked around. The man with the javelin in hand, left the wall against which he had ensconced himself, and advanced towards him.

Many had observed the hurried flight of Fieramosca, and the remarkable change of his countenance; but, as they heard from Diego Garcia the cause which Ettore himself had given for his going away, had no thought of following him. But Inigo and Brancaleone, who loved him most dearly, were not so easily satisfied, but followed him, and although they could not keep up with his swift pace, they had him in sight, and reached the gate a few moments after him.

They found Fieramosca, who, having hold of Pietraccio, hurried him along, saying: — "let us go, quick, quick." — He saw his friends, and said to them in great haste: — "if you are my friends, come along and help me against that traitor of a Valentino; we'll take a boat, we are seven, we shall be at Sant' Orsola in no time." — Brancaleone, glancing at himself and companion, said: — "where are the weapons?" In fact, none of the three had even a sword. Fieramosca was raving,

stamping the ground, and with his hands on his head, looked like a crazy creature. Then Brancaleone, who, on an emergency always spoke to the point, and had plenty of resources, remarked: — "thou, Ettore, go to the shore with these men, get boat and oars ready, and wait for us; thou, Inigo, come along;" — and they both started on a run, while Fieramosca cried after them, — "hurry, hurry, it is almost three o'clock;" Although his friends understood neither the sense of these words, nor the motive of so much precipitation, still, being satisfied that it must have been something of very great importance, they rushed into the armory of Colonna's quarters, and snatching from the walls jacks, helmets, and swords for three persons, returned with the same speed, and overtook him as he had just entered the boat. They then jumped into the skiff while Inigo, who was the last, with a foot on shore, pushed it off, and grasping the oars, they bent over them and strained them fiercely in the effort. Emerging from the little harbor which was behind the citadel, they had to pass under the clock-tower; as they neared the spot, they heard that rumbling of the wheels which precedes the striking of the hours. The unhappy Ettore bent his body down, leaning his head towards the keel, as if he feared lest the tower should then fall and crush him. After a few seconds the large bell gave the three fatal strokes, and the deadened sound was heard losing itself in decreasing vibrations, faintly repeated by the distant echo.

Before we narrate the result of the voyage of our friends, we must go back to the dancing hall for a few moments.

Fanfulla, who, by accident as well as by cunning, had gained possession of the Lady Elvira's secret, had deter-

mined to make it turn into account, but did not know how he could succeed; but when he saw his rival hurrying away from the place without cape or mantle, a very wild thought entered into his head; and being a man who never paused to reflect when there was an opportunity for indulging in some foolery, no matter what the consequences might be, betook himself at once to carry his plan into effect.

He had watched the daughter of Gonzalo, and had seen her going out to the balcony, when the dance was over. It was evident that she had not noticed Ettore's departure. The wag hastened to the cloak-room, where besides his own cap, there was none left but that of Fieramosca; he put it on his head so that the feathers would shade his countenance, and threw over his shoulders the azure mantle of his friend; and any one who had not seen his countenance, would certainly have taken him for Fieramosca. Being thus attired, he made his way through the crowd, and went by stealth to the balcony, which had no other light but what it received through the windows from the halls of the palace. Around a basin perpetually filled by a jet of water, were placed many large vases with orange trees, amidst which it was very easy to be concealed from any one who might happen to come out of the dancing rooms. When Fanfulla entered the balcony, haply, there was no person but the Lady Elvira, whom he saw sitting at the balustrade over the sea, resting her elbow upon the iron rail, and supporting her head with her hand, while she was looking up to the sky.

At that moment the moon was veiled by some clouds driven before the wind. Fanfulla feared, unless he improved the opportunity, he might be recognized when the sky became clear; therefore, with a very soft step, he ap-

proached the Lady Elvira, who did not perceive him until he stood by her side. As she turned to look at him, Fanfulla lowered his head with grace and address, and, reverently falling on one knee beside her, he took her hand and pressed his lips upon it; he did it so carefully that he concealed his face entirely, and the daughter of Gonzalo had not the least doubt as to his being Fieramosca.

She made a motion as if to withdraw her hand, but, as is often the case on such occasions, yielded to the easily forgiven force which detained it. Although the disposition of the Lady Elvira was whimsical, capricious and testy, we must believe that she could not but feel a reproach at finding herself in so close an interview with a young man, and that she actually trembled lest she might be overtaken in that situation by her father, and much more by her austere friend.

A strong breath of wind blew aside the cloud that veiled the moon, and as it was full, it threw a most vivid light over the whole place, and illumined the glittering dress of Elvira and of Fanfulla. Perhaps neither of them took notice of it; but a piercing cry, ascending from the foot of the balcony, and betraying a female voice, made them start, and thinking that others might be attracted by it from the dancing hall, they hurriedly withdrew by different ways to the interior rooms, where those who had heard the cry, having their attention engrossed with other affairs, did not pay any more attention to it. The first cry was followed by a second one more faint, which, dying away in the throat of her who uttered it, was overwhelmed by the heavy fall of a human body at the bottom of a boat. But the balcony was deserted; in the palace they were all bent on enjoying themselves;

no person looked out to see who the unfortunate woman was who was crying for help.

While these events were happening at the Rock, the boat which carried Fieramosca and his companions, propelled by seven stout men, was flying over the waves towards the Monastery, leaving behind a long wake of foam furrowing the sea. Brancaleone, seeing that Fieramosca was only bent on plying the oars with his might and main, said resolutely: "Now, Ettore, I do not know where you are carrying us, but surely this does not look like an affair of small importance, and if we have to work in earnest, these harnesses at the bottom of the boat will not be of much good to us." At these words, they began to put on their armor, one by one, taking care that only one oar was left idle at a time. Having girded on their swords, and covered their heads with light helmets, they bent on their oars with renewed vigor, straining their eyes over the sea to descry the enemy, should he approach.

During the way, Ettore, in disconnected words, informed his friends for what purpose he needed their assistance. Then a small boat hove in sight, and they made for it; but when they came near, they saw it occupied by only one person, slowly paddling towards Barletta. To lose no time, they again steered their course towards the Monastery, and had not noticed who was the person that occupied the boat. Inigo advised that they should approach and ask for information, but Ettore would not listen to it; the appointed hour had passed, and he could hardly hope to be in time.

Had he followed Inigo's advice, how much misfortune would have been prevented!

The Monastery loomed up as they approached.

Fieramosca had his eyes fixed upon it, and could discern every window, but no lights. Then a low, long boat, sweeping over the waters like a swallow, suddenly hove in sight, within two shots' distance, on the left side. Ettore, Inigo, and Brancaleone, all at one time, and with low voices, observed: — There they are; and turning the bow towards the marauders, they redoubled their efforts; the others, perceiving that they were pursued, tried to escape, and pulled for their lives; but the pursuers felt their vigor trebled. The space between the two boats is seen to diminish; the parties can hear each other's conversation; and Fieramosca, stretching himself up as much as he could without stopping from plying the oar, already descries a woman lying at the stern, watched by two men, and cries —Traitors!—with a roar that reëchoed within the walls of the Monastery.

— Hurry, — hurry, — pull away, — pull, — was at once repeated by many husky voices from closed teeth; and their prow was touching the enemy's boat. With the rapidity of the lightning, Ettore drops the oar, and with uplifted sword he throws himself among the ruffians who stood ready to receive him at the point of their weapons. The effort he made in leaping from one boat to the other sent his own craft backward, and thus he found himself alone to receive the shock of the blows which the enemy aimed at his head and breast, and from which he was protected by the headpiece and the breastplate; but his companions, seeing his danger, were soon to the rescue. Pietraccio, who was the nearest, was also the next one to jump into the boat, but he scarcely found himself where he thought he would meet Valentino, when a blow from an oar knocked him down senseless. Inigo and Brancaleone stood by Ettore, and fighting in that crowd, sword

to sword, (and indeed, they were all good swordsmen,) they neither could inflict a wound nor receive any harm; they could only give and receive blows and thrusts with wonderful rapidity; and in the confusion, they made the boat roll one side and the other, at the imminent peril of being capsized.

Pietraccio's men had not been able to come forward, because there was room only for three men abreast; but they did good work. They lifted up the female who was at the stern, and laid her down in their own boat. As the three combatants saw the woman safe, (following the advice of Brancaleone, given in a whisper,) they slowly retired, and bolting out of the enemy's boat into their own, they gave the others a chance to part. Ettore would not have let his prey escape on so easy terms had he recognized Valentino in the melée; but as he did not see him among the rest, he felt loath to imbrue his hands with the blood of the knaves. Moreover, satisfied (at least he thought so) that Ginevra was rescued, he thought it was his duty to comfort her. On the other hand, Don Miguel became furious on seeing the fruit of so many hardships suddenly snatched from his hands, and he was angry with himself for not having secured the possession of the woman at the forepart of the boat; but the mishap was made now, and he knew very well that to attempt a recovery of his prey from the hands of these valiant young men would be as successful as trying to dig holes in water. But Valentino's hireling did not submit to his disappointment without some revenge. While the three friends were leaving the boat, he had pursued them with a sword in the right hand and a stiletto in the left. He aimed many blows at Fieramosca, who was the last to leave; and as he was stepping over the side of the boat,

he succeeded in pricking him lightly with the point of his dagger; but in the excitement of the scuffle, Ettore did not perceive it.

Having thus parted, one party continued their journey towards Barletta; the other steered towards the Monastery.

The woman was wrapped up in a sheet. Fieramosca, still panting from overexertion, bolstered her up the best way he could. Removing the covering which enveloped her, instead of Ginevra, he saw Zorais in a swoon. At any other time he would have blessed God for having liberated her; but then he found that he had obtained nothing at the very moment he thought he had accomplished everything. What had become of Ginevra? How did this woman happen to be here? He gave a deep sigh, striking his forehead with his fist, and urging his companions to pull away at the oars. Not knowing the mistake, they were astonished that he should not yet be satisfied. In a few moments, he found himself at the island, and ran with great speed up into Ginevra's room. He found everything opened and deserted, and the most profound quiet in the Monastery. As he was coming out to obtain some information elsewhere, he met his companions who were carrying Zorais. She had, by that time, recovered, but she could not answer the urgent and anxious questions of Fieramosca, except by saying that towards three of the clock on that evening she had been awakened by a number of men who had entered her room, had enveloped her in a sheet, and carried her away to a boat. She remembered no more; she knew nothing of Ginevra, whom she had not seen since noon, when, perceiving that she was in low spirits, she thought better to leave her alone, and at the usual hour she had retired to rest, without inquiring after her.

Ettore listened to the whole story, bolt upright, with his eyes fixed on Zorais; and at the end of her words his countenance began to change, becoming pale, and his cheeks sinking; at last he was obliged to sit down, and as he tried to rise again, strength failed him. One of the party had gone by this time to knock at the doors of the Monastery, and having awakened Gennaro, he was returning with a light. Brancaleone and Inigo were wondering at the countenance of Fieramosca, so frightfully changed, and they imagined it was the effect of much labor and anxiety. He tried again to rise, but his strength had left him entirely, and his head falling backward on the chair, he said, with faltering voice:—"Brancaleone! Inigo! I have never been so ill in my life, and I do not feel strength enough to lift a feather, much less to wield a sword; time flies by, and what will become of Ginevra? Oh! that I might recover my strength for only one hour! . . . and then to become dust! . . . I beseech you, dearest friends, let not a moment pass. . . . You go . . . I cannot say where; . . . but go to Barletta; search for her; liberate the woman; find her out by all means. Eternal God! that I should not be able to stir one foot in her behalf! . . ." and he tried again, but he found it impossible. Then again he entreated his companions to leave him, and hurry to help the woman; and he urged them so much that, feeling there was no time for debating, they left him with a promise that they would soon be back with some news; and having returned to the boat with great haste, they rowed away towards Barletta.

Zorais, meanwhile, with great solicitude, was trying her best to help her liberator, showing in her words and acts a most tender affection; and having unlaced the

helmet, she was hard at work in undoing the fastenings of his gorget. When the armor was removed, she wiped the cold perspiration running down his brow and neck, and discovered that a wound had been inflicted under the shirt collar.

"Alas! thou art wounded!" she exclaimed. And with some linen wiping away the little blood which had oozed out, and which made the wound appear greater than it actually was, she felt encouraged, seeing it so light, and said: —

"It is nothing! — only a scratch!" but then examining it more closely, she noticed that a rim of reddish purple was forming around the wound, and a livid hue was fast covering the eyes and the lips of Fieramosca, while his hands and ears, becoming of the color of box, were icy and stiff. Born and reared in the east, she was skilful in the treatment of wounds of every kind, and she immediately suspected that the poniard was poisoned. She begged of the youth to go to bed; and supporting him, not without great effort, she succeeded in leading him to it. Upon feeling his pulse, she found it very slow and corded.

However, the sufferings of the body were nothing in comparison to the tortures which gradually took possession of Fieramosca's mind, presenting themselves under new forms. The adventures of that night, and Ginevra's danger had, up to that moment, occupied his mind entirely. But, as it happens to the man who is condemned to die, if on the last night of his life he can enjoy some sleep, he will awake with the sudden idea of his imminent death falling upon his heart like a dead weight. In the same manner, Fieramosca had scarcely recovered from the consternation in which he was, when he thought

of the challenge, and of the oath he had given that he would not expose himself to any danger of being harmed. He thought of the shame which he would bring upon himself, should he fail to be at his post. He thought of the grief of his heart, should he be prevented from raising his sword with his companions, — how the French would sneer at him, and how the Italian honor would be jeoparded. All these thoughts shot through his mind, and shook his nerves, so that all the muscles of his body became contracted in convulsive movements, and he gave a sigh of so much bitterness, that Zorais started upon hearing it, and inquired what was the matter. Ettore cried: —

"I am dishonored forever! The challenge! Zorais, the challenge!" — and he struck his forehead with clenched fist. "Only a few days hence . . . . and I am reduced to a state that not a whole month will restore me to my strength. O God! what great sin have I been guilty of to deserve this misfortune?"

The young woman did not know how to reply to these words; but very probably she thought more of the dangerous state of him whom she loved so much, than of the fight. There *was* a danger, and her experience told her that it was every moment increasing. A collapse into a lethargic inaction had suddenly succeeded that moment of excitement. He had fallen on his back, his head heavily hanging on one side of the pillow, the face even paler than before; the swelling of the veins on the neck appeared convulsive, and Zorais, examining the wound, found it had increased to the size of an inch all around.

And Ettore still kept on groaning: — "Behold the champion of Italian honor! Here, the glorious award

of the battle, the boasting, and the confidence of victory . . . . . here they all come to an end! And still, before God! where is my crime? — Could I act differently from what I have done?"

But these reasons were very far from giving him any relief, and he thought: —

"To whom shall I tell this story? — to whom my reasons? And if ever I reveal all, the enemy will be very glad to pretend that they do not believe me, and will say: 'Ettore feigned all this, because he was afraid of us!'"

While his mind was painfully tortured by all these thoughts, the poison, which had been inserted into his body by the stiletto in Don Miguel's hands, was making progress, creeping through the veins which branch off from the surface of the cranium. The suffering youth felt the light of his eyes grow dim, and the clearness of his intellect lose its distinctness, while his temples were racked by pains which at first made everything about him appear unsteady, then to roll around with increasing speed, with an abundance of shining dots which dazzled his eyes. Zorais stood by, looking upon him, affrighted and trembling; while Ettore kept his eyes open, and glaringly riveted upon her. As his senses grew more and more unsteady, and the light from the failing lamp more and more faint, the form and features of the young maiden began to change into those of La Motte. This spectre drew its mouth one side, and expressed a smile bitter and frightful; then it became larger, and opening the lips, the figure of Graiano d'Asti appeared; it also increased from small dimensions, until, opening its jaws in like manner, it changed into the pale likeness of the Valentino. Thus these forms being reproduced from

each other presented as it were a phantasmagoria of those persons, who very naturally must have been most distinct in the mind of the sick man. Among the rest, even Ginevra's image appeared. He appealed to her with the most endearing names, and said: "To let me die thus! I that loved thee so much! Oh, take me out of this pit . . . . Drive away those lizards that creep over my face! . . . ."—and other vain and vague words of similar import. At this stage of his sickness, all the figures which he imagined he saw began to mingle together; at first they formed a mixture of a red and tremulous hue like a lasting flash of lightning; this by degrees becoming misty, and then darkening, was entirely extinguished, when the youth was bereft of sense and motion.

CHAPTER XVI.

To keep pace with the many events which took place simultaneously in different places during that memorable evening, and to bring up at the proper time, in corresponding relations, the persons who took part in them, it becomes necessary to hold the reader in suspense as to the fate of the actors. Although this is a favorite plan with historians, we do not deem it very acceptable, when the book is such as to inspire the reader with the desire of knowing the final result of events. We shall not offer any apology to *our* readers for having followed this general rule, which in our case became indispensable. An apology of this nature would be looked upon as the offspring of vanity, and afford cause for a smile at our expense. Modesty in many is virtue; others can turn its practice to account.

However, be that as it may, we must take leave even of Fieramosca for a short time. Let us then retrace our steps to the Rock, and visit Valentino, who is tarrying in the small apartments on the lower story over the sea.

He had failed in accomplishing one of the purposes which had led him to the Spanish camp. His cunning was matched by the wisdom and foresight of Gonzalo, and he could not prevail on him to enter into a league, or even to grant him his support. The Spaniard had kept his word, as far as to keep his concealment secret, but had declined to accede to his other requests. For

the rest he entertained him with every consideration which was due to his station, if not to his character. During the seven or eight days which passed between the opening and the ending of these negotiations, the Duke kept close in his little quarters, to escape being noticed; and if he ever went out for the sake of enjoying the open air, it was always at night, and protected by a mask, as it was customary for men of high station in those times, — a custom which, we must allow, was not always followed for hallowed purposes. But, as we have mentioned, he had some other motive in his visiting Barletta, besides his political manœuvres. He was anxious to have revenge on the woman who had dared to show contempt for him. And the plots laid for this end, by the dexterity and skill of Don Miguel, were to be consummated that evening. It will appear strange to more than one of our readers that this famous debauchee who had given himself up to every kind of iniquity, should feel so much interested in the possession of one woman, and should so earnestly pursue any trace of her. Truly it would be a mistake to think that love, even of the most abject sort, prompted the desires of Valentino. No: Ginevra had resisted him; and her resistance was accompanied with contempt and horror for him. She lived happy, he thought, with another. He felt as if he had been made little of, and scorned. And who could ever boast of having kept Cesare Borgia at bay?

Did he ever meet any woman, who had beauty, and was not bereft by him of virtue or happiness? — and yet there were some among them of the highest respectability, and who, being connected with men of power, might have deemed themselves well protected and secure. How could it now be borne that a woman little known and

less flattered by society, should scorn him who held Italy in fear, from one end to the other?

At this time, Valentino knew, from the promises of Don Miguel, that he was near satisfying his revenge, and would say to himself — she will have to pay dear for having kept me so long in this dungeon! — In fact, it must have been a sore trial to live in small rooms, so much like a prison, accustomed as he was to the splendor of a court; but he would cheerfully bear a thousand privations for the sake of obtaining his purpose. Moreover, he had not been entirely deprived of occupation during those days. Besides the hours he had spent with Gonzalo, and the hours he had been engaged with Don Miguel in planning the best ways to carry out their undertaking, messengers arrived day after day from Romagna, sent to him by his faithful men with letters, dispatches, and information on the affairs of the day. They arrived and departed always by night; — another instance of what Nicolò Machiavelli had asserted, in writing to the Commune of Florence a short time before these events took place, *that of all the Courts in the world, in none was secrecy so well kept as in that of the Duke;* — and although he did not add by what means this great secrecy was secured, he gave to understand plainly enough, that an impudent tongue was surely punished with the silence of the grave.

This correspondence was carried by means of light shallops, which sailed along the coasts of Romagna, and found suitable hiding-places among the rocks at the foot of Mount Gargano; thence, under the cover of night, the messenger was dispatched in a boat to the castle. From such a crew, Don Miguel had selected his men to aid him in the business of that night.

On that evening, while the castle reëchoed with the music and the joy of the festival, Valentino was seated before a table, and to beguile the time, he was examining the files of papers brought to him by the couriers of the previous nights. He was dressed in a cape fastened in front by a row of small buttons, the bust and the sleeves of black satin fitting the person rather tight, and over the sleeves were loose strips of white velvet, confined at four different points around the arms with a list of the same kind of velvet. Three or four buttons unfastened near the collar of the cape, left open to view a coat-of-mail of the finest steel, which the Duke always wore. This style of dress was very often used by the Duke, and those who have visited the gallery of Prince Borghese in Rome, will remember the portrait of the Duke, taken by Raffaello, in this costume. In spite of his robust constitution, he had been for some time suffering from a salt humor of an herpetic nature, either creeping through the blood or appearing on the skin, and especially over the face; and it would then turn its livid paleness into a spongy redness, covered with blotches running with humor. The loathsome deformity of his face was such as to sicken even his most constant attendants; and a soul like his could not be enclosed in a frame more befittingly portraying its qualities. In consequence of the sedentary life which, so much against his habits, he had been constrained to lead during those days, and from the effects of the weather, it being then spring, those humors were breaking out most furiously, deforming his features more than usual, and giving to his whole frame that unaccountable and restless peevishness, which is generally the consequence of such ailments.

About two o'clock, when dancing was commenced in

the halls above, the door leading to the Duke's apartment was lightly pushed open by a man dressed in red-brown tights, with a cape reaching half down his thigh, a black hood drawn over his eyes, a sword and a stiletto at his side, and a bundle under his arm. Valentino looked up; and the messenger entering, made a bow and laid on the table the bundle, without a word being uttered by either party. The Duke laid one hand on the package, and said: —

"I shall quit this place to-night; go to the last room of these apartments; shut thyself in, and for any noise that thou mayst hear, move not, unless I call thee."

The man left by a door opposite to that by which he had entered. Cesare Borgia, with the sharp blade of his stiletto, severed the vermilion tapes which fastened together the dispatches he had just received from his father. As he opened the package, a golden ball fell from it and rolled over the table; the Duke started with a look of great suspicion; but examining more carefully both papers and seals, he became reassured and resumed his seat.

Let us not imagine that this fright was the consequence of a panic fear. The ways of administering poison in those days were so various, and even when sent in a letter would produce on the opening an effect so immediate, that we may easily pardon the Duke, if in perceiving a mysterious unexpected object, he became alarmed; and if there was a man who should at once think the worse of all mankind, it was certainly Cesare Borgia.

The letters were written in cypher, the key of which was in possession only of himself and of the writer; his long practice enabled him to run over the contents with a quick glance. Here we give its substance: —

"Alexander had been sounded by the ambassador of the Cristianissimo on the project of forming a league against the Catholic King, for the purpose of taking from him the kingdom of Naples; he offered at the same time to join his forces with those of Alexander, in the campaign against Siena, and against the estates of Count Giordano. But Alexander had not thought fit to enter into the compact before he was acquainted with the result of the negotiations between Valentino and Gonzalo."

. . . . . .

"He had received from the mother and paramour of Cardinal Orsino, a sum of money and a jewel of very great value, taken from the palace of Count Giordano, which had been delivered over to pillage by order of Alexander, after the death of the Duke of Gravina, Vitellozzo, and Liverotto of Fermo.

"It was his desire that the Duke should keep his troops in readiness, that he might, after the death of said Cardinal, take the field at Bracciano where the Orsini and their adherents had concentrated their forces.

"He had been forewarned against a danger which threatened him that year, and he had been advised to carry on his person a small globe of gold, containing a charm of superior power, the like of which was sent to the Duke for the same purpose."

Although the facts touched in this letter are unfortunately true, and the treachery planned against Corneto recoiled on the head of Alexander, and was the cause of his death, we have hesitated before placing them before our readers. But if God, for some inscrutable ends, has allowed that a supreme keeper of the holiest things might abuse them so shamefully, it would be an ill advised purpose to conceal his iniquities, and we should be

blamed for our partiality, appearing more jealous for party than for truth, which will forever stand without the aid of dishonest means. The faults of Borgia, and of other ministers of the Church, will be weighed in the scales of God's justice, and man is most solemnly forewarned of the awful severity of its judgment. But from the ashes of those ministers, as well as from the tombs of the martyrs, towering and powerful, the truth eternally is proclaimed, that not on gold, not on arms, not on the arts of human policy, but on the infallible promises of the Gospel arose, and gloriously stands, the Church of Christ.

Far different ideas arose in the mind of the Duke of Romagna, as he perused his father's letter. Turning his eyes alternately from the letter to the golden ball, which he kept twirling between his fingers, a smile of compassion — he believed neither in God nor in his saints — appeared on his countenance; but then again, he seemed to be agitated with feelings of a credulous and timid suspicion; so true it is that the spirit of man needs to see a principle that will work beyond the grave. Had he not resolved to depart that night, the contents of that letter would have determined him to it. A plot which flattered his ambition so much, and might replenish his coffers, was an affair of far more importance than running after a woman. He thought that Don Miguel would not be long in returning with his men; and so placing the ball in his bosom, with an air of *nonchalance* which seemed to say — "let it be as it will," — he began to put together his papers, and whatever else he intended to carry with him.

In a few minutes everything was ready. Then he resumed his seat as before; and for want of something

else to do, he again took the ball from his bosom, examined it over and over, and passing it from one hand to the other, was thinking of him who had sent it; and was trying to guess what it might contain. Then passing on from one idea to another, he thought of those principles of religion and of those articles of faith which he himself had once believed, then of his splendid estates, which were the fruit of the abuse of religious power; and laughing in his heart at the credulity of many, exclaimed:—"for my part, I enjoy pleasure and power at the expense of all."—But he also heard a voice in a faint, but deep tone, rising from under the foundation of so much pride, violence, and irreligion, and repeating: "*It might be true!*"

The Duke strove not to mind it, but he could not stifle it; he rose and began to walk up and down the room with great impatience, endeavoring to change the course of thought. But to no purpose. Those words, "It might be true!" were forever sounding in his ears, pursuing him, pressing him, and poisoning, so to speak, the enjoyment of possessing so many honors, so much power, and so much wealth. He threw himself on the bed, burying angrily his head in the pillows; and calling himself a fool, he succeeded at last in calming himself. The eyelids became heavy, he closed his eyes, and fell asleep.

But it was not the slumber of a calm soul. The ideas of the waking mind worked in the same direction during his sleep. He dreamt he was in Rome, on the road from the Castle to Saint Peter's. Heaven and earth were in great disorder. Everything looked entirely different from what it used to be, enveloped in darkness, and in an uproar of yelling and shouting. In his efforts to advance towards the Vatican he failed, and was panting

with fatigue. He felt as if some persons had hold of him; he looked around; he was surrounded by those whom he had betrayed, poisoned, and murdered; they had their clutches in his hair and in his flesh, and made the air hideous with long cries of despair.

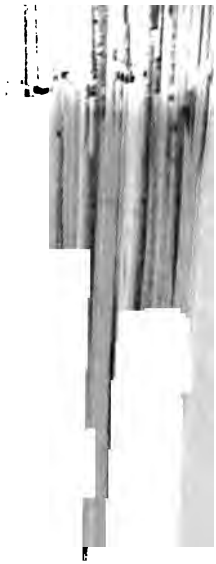
Then, as if by magic, he found himself in Saint Peter's, which was the scene of an undistinguishable tumult, all dark, resounding with loud wails, the walls tottering, the tombs thrown open, and spectres running to and fro; and when he was harassed by his victims, who incessantly cried, "Vengeance of God!" he thought —"then this must be the judgment that I would not believe.".

And he struggled desperately to make his way, and seek refuge near the Pontiff, whom he could see at a distance, in the midst of a faint and pale light. But he was held back on one side by his brother, the Duke of Candia, with his wounds wide open, discharging not blood, but a kind of filthy, whitish humor, his features distorted and swollen, like those of a corpse that has been long decaying under the waters; on the other side by the Duke of Biselli, Astorre Manfredi, and women and children, all violently sobbing, and with outstretched hands, crying for justice and revenge! Alexander was mantled in black vestments, with the yellowish color of death upon his flabby countenance; and while his figure began slowly to rise, the sobbing and the crying were overwhelmed by an outburst of infernal laughter, emanating from the lips of a demon, who, crouching on the floor, and his chin resting on his knees, shouted, —"*Jesus Christ, Religion, Popes . . . all an imposture,*" —and that shout rebounded in the echo of a protracted howl all along the arches of the church.

That howl was still in the Duke's ears, when he was entirely awakened and sitting up in his bed.

He was for a moment frightened, but the dream only confirmed him in his impious belief that he might commit any crime without any fear of punishment in another life.

As he was drawing encouragement from this thought — it was just a few minutes past the hour of three — the buzzing noise of so many persons conversing together, the music, the sound of mirth and enjoyment from the halls above, penetrated with a faint and distant sound, through the massive thickness of the vaults into those apartments of the lower story. At that same time, the same noise which had brought to a sudden close the interview between the Lady Elvira and Fanfulla, was heard by the Duke, but much nearer, and as if it came from behind the door of his room, which opened over a narrow strip of the beach between the sea and the foundations of the castle. He went out to ascertain whence the noise came, but he only saw an empty boat with the bow resting on the sand. He looked up to the piazza and to the windows, but he could not see a living soul; he was about returning to his room, but on a second thought he turned around and advanced a few steps towards the skiff, and stretching his neck over its side, he discovered a woman lying prostrate at the bottom of it, with her head between her hands, and moaning from time to time. After the first movement of surprise, he instantly made up his mind, and entering the boat, placed one arm around the waist of the woman, the other under her knees, and thus lifting her, senseless as she was, he carried her into his room and laid her on the bed. But who can tell his amazement, when bringing the light near to her face, he



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of time, to torture the victim of his revenge at his leisure.

At last a deep drawn sigh made the bosom of the young woman swell. She opened her eyes for an instant and shut them immediately. Again she opened them, and again; then she began to stare in the face of him who stood before her motionless and unknown; but she looked at him vaguely, without any idea being impressed on her mind by the sight; still her eye seemed to loath the appearance of that disfigured countenance; she turned it away, slowly, and with a look of so much terror that it might have moved any other heart. Recovering her consciousness by degrees, the remembrance of Ettore at the feet of the Lady Elvira was the first clear idea which presented itself to her mind.

"Oh, Ettore!" she said, scarcely articulating the words; "then it was true, and thou hast betrayed me!" and covering her eyes and her brow with both hands, she remained a few moments in that attitude. Valentino's lips slightly curled with anger, as he heard that name.

At length Ginevra remembered that she must be in the boat, and leaning on her elbow, made an effort to rise, when she felt the softness of the bed; she gazed around in great terror, perceived the Duke, and uttered a cry; but it was stifled at once by the hand of that brute, who caught her by the throat, and threw her back on the bed.

"Ginevra, do not cry," said Valentino; "throw not thy breath away; I am glad thou hast come to pay me a visit, and I shall repay thee for a journey taken at this hour of night. . . . But it is not me thou seekest. Is it not so? What use to fret? Not every ball that is cast comes out perfectly round."

Ginevra heard these words with a tremor which quite overpowered her. As she had not seen the Duke for a long time, she could not recognize him at once, and only felt a sensation of horror, as she remembered some features of that physiognomy. But knowing that it was not in her power to offer any resistance, she only implored thus: "*Signore!* . . . who are you? . . . take pity on me! . . . what do you want? . . . let me go! . . ."

And the Duke:—

"Dost thou remember, Ginevra, in Rome many years ago, how thou didst act towards a man who loved thee like the apple of his eye, and who would have lavished upon thee gifts and caresses such as a woman never could boast of before? Dost thou remember that thy manners towards him, then, would have put disgrace upon a stable boy? Dost thou remember that his love was laughed at by thee, his offers treated with contempt, and that thou didst actually put on airs which would have been too lofty even for a queen? Well, dost thou remember who that man was? it was myself. And dost thou know who I am? Cesare Borgia."

The abhorred name fell like a weight upon Ginevra's heart, crushing every hope out of it; she breathed not, but shaking like an aspen leaf, she looked at the Duke as she would at a tiger that held her in his clutches, and whom she could not even think of moving to compassion with words.

"Now that thou knowest who I am," continued the Duke, "just think whether thou hast any claim to my compassion; still I might be prevailed not to wreak on thee that vengeance which I ought and might very easily take. But, on one condition, Ginevra; that is, that thou behavest wisely; and I assure thee, thou needst to do so."

The comparative mildness of these words kindled a spark of hope in the heart of the woman, and with joined hands, not venturing, however, to look at him, that he might not perceive her horror and disgust, she began to pray to him as she would have done before the shrine of a saint, that he would not crush a poor woman already too miserable and unhappy.

"I beseech you, noble Lord, by the Wounds of Jesus, by that Day when even you, now so powerful on earth, will stand a naked soul in the presence of an eternal Judge. . . . If you ever had a woman whom you loved most dearly, and saw her in another man's power, and should in vain entreat for mercy, . . . if your own mother, if your own sister were in my situation, and prayed, and prayed in vain, you would cry for vengeance before God — would you not — against any one who should martyr them so? . . ."

These words, coupling the names of Vannozza and of Lucrezia Borgia with ideas of virtue and honesty, were the occasion of a smile in Valentino, who knew them a little. But it was an ominous smile, which redoubled the fears of Ginevra; still she continued her entreaties, the crying changing her voice until she could scarcely utter the words distinctly, interrupted as she was by sobs, and these were the last words: "I am an insignificant, miserable woman; what good may it do you, what glory will it bring to you, the powerful lord you are, to have taken revenge on me? . . . Who knows but the day will come when the recollection of having shown mercy to me will afford a balm to your heart?" It is not in our power to describe the anxiety, anguish, and despair of the most unhappy Ginevra, — her tears, her entreaties, at last her raving and her curses on the fiend who tor-

mented her. The picture would lacerate the reader's heart.

In the meantime Don Miguel had returned with his companion. He was in very bad humor, with his hands empty, and fearing the revenge of his master. Reaching the foot of the castle he saw the two boats, one belonging to the messenger, and the other to Ginevra, and he became suspicious; he approached the door, and hearing the tumult within became alarmed; he pushed the door, but it was bolted; however, he felt reassured when from the tone of voice with which the Duke answered "Wait," he concluded that there was no danger.

The noise in the galleries above, and the shouts of the people, reëchoed as loudly as before. Don Miguel listened more closely at the crevices of the door, and after a pause of a few minutes, heard the Duke exclaiming: "Well! I leave thee to thy God and to thy saints; . . ." and instantly the bolt was removed, the door was opened, and the Duke came out.

The servant wished to make some excuses, but was interrupted. "Thou wilt tell me all at another time; of all this I know more than thou canst tell me." These words might have led Don Miguel to believe that his master was angry, but from the manners and looks of the Duke, he concluded that there was some mystery which he did not understand.

Valentino addressed the men who had come with Don Miguel, saying: "quick, all hands aboard, and wait for me under Sant' Orsola," and then to Don Miguel: "come thou with me."

The crew were promptly pulling at the oars, and soon out of sight. Don Miguel and the Duke reëntered the rooms, and immediately came out again carrying Ginevra,

whom they replaced in the boat in which she had been found.

The messenger was then called out of the room in which he had been confined by the Duke; and the three together entering the boat without uttering a word, overtook the larger one, and all embarked in it.

The Duke sat on the poop, and Don Miguel was standing before him; and although he now knew why his master did not seem much disappointed at the failure of the plot, still he undertook to tell him the reason why they had returned with empty hands, and very minutely narrated how they had proceeded, and how, being attacked by a superior force they had scarcely been able to defend themselves, and the woman had been rescued.

"But one of them did not get off very easy," he added, pointing behind him to Pietraccio, who, as we have seen, had received a blow on the head from an oar, and having fallen senseless in the boat, had been carried away a prisoner. At that time he had recovered, and was sitting a few steps from the Duke; the men, apprehending no danger of his being able to escape, did not molest him.

"This ruffian," continued Don Miguel, "fell upon us like a fury, but the Rosso here bestowed upon his ears a whack that prostrated him. I thought he was dead, but I see he is coming to himself."

From sundry expressions of Don Miguel, Pietraccio became convinced that he was in the presence of him, whom he had in vain sought among the crowd that afternoon. Valentino perceived that the fellow looked at him with a dark eye, and with a mien that betrayed treacherous intentions, and was about to order him to be

thrown to the fish. But Don Miguel who, as the reader will remember, had heard in the prison of Sant' Orsola the dying words of the assassin's mother, and the last injunction that he should seek vengeance on Cesare Borgia, was also satisfied, looking at him by stealth, that he was meditating some desperate blow on his master. The villain had attached himself to the Duke's service for the sake of his pecuniary interest; nevertheless, he would have rejoiced, if without danger of being implicated, and without the least suspicion on himself, he should have a chance of making him pay for an old offence. The reader will easily understand what feelings Don Miguel must have harbored towards the Duke, when he is acquainted with the fact that the woman whose death he had witnessed in the dungeon under the tower, was his own wife.

When, after the encounter with Ettore Fieramosca, Don Miguel had found Pietraccio in his power, he conceived some general ideas, and almost arranged a plot in his mind, to use him as an instrument of vengeance for his mother; but in that hurry of events that succeeded each other so rapidly he could not bring his thoughts into any definite order; thus having no set plan as yet formed, he only watched for any opportunity that might offer itself, and now he thought that things were taking a turn favorable to his wishes. In fact, after he had made the last remark to the Duke, there was a moment of silence, which afforded the young man time enough to attempt a desperate blow. He rose from his place, and darting by Don Miguel, who only feigned to hold him back, he rushed upon Valentino like an enraged beast, wishing to tear him to pieces with nails and teeth; but the Duke suspected the man's purpose, and was prepared to re-

ceive him; and Don Miguel had scarcely caught him by the shoulders, when Pietraccio fell at his feet, pierced through and through by the stiletto the Duke carried at his side, and which he had used with incredible dexterity.

The attack on the part of Pietraccio, and the blows from the Duke, were the work of an instant; and when the crew turned around to see whence the noise came, it was all over; but then halting for an instant they perceived Valentino replacing the stiletto in its sheath, and pushing the still breathing body of the murdered youth with his foot, and commanding that it should be thrown overboard.

"The wretched fool!" exclaimed Don Miguel, pretending to be much alarmed at the danger his master had been in. "Still no person can persuade me that this fellow was not a different man from what he appeared. . . . I found him a few days ago in the dungeon of the tower of yon Monastery, thrown in there with his mother; both had been captured by the bailiffs with a band of assassins; the mother died from the wounds she had received in the scuffle, and before breathing her last she gave to her son a chain of gold, telling him of a certain story connected with it. . . . O! yes, I remember it . . . telling him that she had received it from an *inamorato* in Pisa. . . . Yes . . . hold on, Rosso, before we throw him over, I want to see whether he has it still. The gold, at least, might be spared from the fish."

Thus saying, he unbuttoned the boy's jacket, found the chain, and having taken it into his hand he displayed it before the eyes of the Duke, who had paid great attention to the circumstances narrated by Don Miguel.

Valentino could not master his feelings so far as to

conceal the sudden emotion produced in him by that sight. He remained for a moment absorbed in some serious thought; and his hands, which were clasped together, holding the precious jewel hanging from his neck, fell on his sides as if bereft of all power. He resumed his seat, repeating with a husky voice the command that the body should be thrown into the water. He turned his eyes another way, until the splash of the waters told him that his command had been fulfilled; a spray from that watery grave swept over the boat, and over the men in it. Clenching the chain in his hands, he threw it a great distance into the bay, and drawing the cloak around his person, he leaned his head on one hand, and became silent.

Don Miguel feigning respect for the thoughts of the Duke, withdrew and seated himself among the crew, who went on rowing in deep silence; no other noise was heard for the rest of the passage but the dipping of the oar-blades, and the dripping of the water. The minion of Cesare Borgia had enjoyed a revenge which no other man, perhaps, in the world ever had over the Duke; it awoke in his heart recollections of his past life, which gave rise to some feelings of remorse; but it was the remorse which, having no balm with it, is like the despair of hell. It was the pride of Don Miguel's heart that he had been enabled to taste the pleasure of this great revenge.

After this accident, they pursued their journey until they reached the shallop, kept in waiting for the Duke, and immediately set sail for the shores of Romagna.

But we must willingly take leave of this gang of ribalds.

CHAPTER XVII.

The departure of Ettore Fieramosca and of his friends from the ball, had been noticed only by few persons, and did not therefore interfere with the gaieties of the occasion. Fanfulla left the piazza, where he had the interview with the Lady Elvira, and with great dispatch and dexterity restored Ettore's cloak and cap to their place, when he returned to mingle in the dance just as if nothing had happened, chuckling at the trick he had played on his friend, and dying of the wish to tell it. The daughter of Gonzalo kept a searching eye all around to discover Ettore, wondering at his sudden disappearance, and endeavoring to satisfy herself as to the cause of it.

Things had continued thus for about an hour, when Brancaleone and Inigo entered, and inquired from the first persons they met where Gonzalo was. They were directed to a part of the hall where the Captain was in conversation with some of the French barons. On approaching, they drew him one side, and gave him an account of what had happened; they well knew that Valentino was in the castle, and that he was the cause of all the mischief. Gonzalo's advice was requested how they should act. The Captain believed the Duke to be capable of that, and even of greater infamies; still he seemed perplexed for an instant; then he beckoned them

to follow him, as he moved towards his apartment, and seeing Don Garcia in the company, he bade him also follow.

He did not wish to acknowledge that the Duke was in the castle, lest he might seem to violate his pledged word. But then reflecting that he had taken his leave that same day, and had made arrangements to depart in the night, he thought it very strange that he should have chosen that very last moment to commit such a crime. At all events, he determined to clear matters himself; and having called for lights, he girded on his sword, and led the way through a narrow corridor to some private winding stairs, and unfastening two iron doors they descended. There still remained another door; Gonzalo halted, and whispered to his companions to wait for him without making the least noise, and not to move until called. Then opening the door, he entered the rooms of the Duke, and found them deserted, without any light, and in the utmost confusion; chairs lying about, a table upset, by the bed a lamp extinguished, and the oil running on the floor; the adjoining rooms all empty. Having then called his attendants, and thus remained for a few moments undecided and deliberating with himself, he said at last: —

"Were I to keep faith with this ribald, I might endanger the safety of the innocent. Know ye then, the Duke has lived in these rooms for several days past. He had made up his mind to leave this evening or tomorrow; further I cannot say, because I know nothing more. We are well satisfied that he is capable of any debauchery; perhaps he is the author of even this. Act then as you think best; pursue him if you choose; you have my full consent; and you, Don Garcia, give them whatever aid may be needed."

Inigo thought at once that the Duke's vessel might perhaps be yet seen from the window; but as he could not see distinctly through the thick glass, and as it would have taken too long to unbolt those huge frames, he ran to the small door which opened over the narrow strip of beach, a spot he was well acquainted with, and going out he saw the small boat, and in it lying a young woman whom he did not know, but who at once he thought might be Ginevra.

His companions, being called to the spot in great haste, were at a loss what to think, on seeing her so abandoned and in that miserable plight. With the most gentle care they carried her to a bed in the Duke's rooms, which was arranged by them in the best way they knew. Gonzalo felt to his heart the wretched situation of the female, and hastened up stairs to place her in care of some woman. But, being yet in utter ignorance of the circumstances of the event, and feeling anxious that it should not then become known, he thought of Vittoria Colonna, on whose well-tried prudence he could rely. He entered the dancing halls, and meeting the daughter of Fabricio, he led her quietly to Ginevra's bed, informing her on the way of what had transpired, and how needful would her comforts be to the unfortunate woman who was unknown to all. The generous and affectionate heart of Vittoria accepted the trust with zeal and gratitude. She approached the bed of the female, and gazed in her face for an instant, then arranged the bed more comfortably, placed the pillow so as to afford more relief to her aching head and throbbing temples, and fulfilled in a perfect manner the gentle duties of nurse, combining as they do that mingled sagacity and tenderness which is the choice talent bestowed by Providence on woman, when she was appointed to minister to the afflicted.

Ginevra was then in a state of lethargy, into which she had been thrown by so much suffering and mental anguish; she could not be called senseless, nor had she the use of her mind; she offered not the least resistance, and allowed those around her to move her arms, or her head from one position to another; her eyes were open in their natural way, but they were dull, unmeaning, and vaguely rolling from place to place. Vittoria well knew that this state, the less violent it appeared, was the more to be dreaded; she knew that there was no time to lose, and having therefore requested the men to withdraw, she ordered some of her women to bring cordials and spirits, and with them they succeeded in bringing back a life which seemed to be fast ebbing away.

The first sign of returning consciousness was to look around with an expression of extreme terror, and then start up and throw herself out of her bed, in a vain attempt to run away; but she was so weak that she would have fallen on the floor, had not Vittoria opened her arms, and with gentle violence made her lie down again.

"Oh God!" then said Ginevra, "are you also in league with him? and still you appear to be a gentlewoman. You are young and handsome, and will you not have compassion on me?"

"Not only that," answered Vittoria, taking Ginevra's hands and raising them to her lips, "but we are here, and every one of the castle are at your service, to help you and to protect you; but calm yourself for heaven's sake; you have nothing to fear now."

"Well, then, if it is so," replied Ginevra, again throwing her feet out of the bed, "let me go; let me go."

Vittoria imagined that this great desire of being taken

away from that place might proceed from aberration of mind, and perceiving her great weakness and the change in her features, endeavored with kind words to persuade her to have a little patience; but the horror she had for the place had become a madness, growing in its fury the more it was resisted. She continued to act frantically, and cried while saying:—

"Lady! for the love of God, and for the love of Our Blessed Mother, only one favor I ask:—take me away from this bed; throw me into the sea; into the fire;—but take me away from this bed. I shall not give you much trouble. . . . A draught of water. . . . I am burning; . . . and let me say a few words to Fra Mariano of San Dominico here by. . . . But let me go from here. . . . Let me go. . . ."

And saying thus, she again started up, meeting no more objections from Vittoria, who saw it was useless to offer resistance. With the help of the attending women, she carried Ginevra up stairs, and lodged her in an out-of-the-way room, where Gonzalo had ordered a couch to be prepared for the purpose. Then as she was undressed, and had entered the bed, she gave a deep sigh, and said:

"Signora! God sees everything; and he sees how fervently my heart prays that you may be rewarded for the good you are doing to me. O my mother! Holy Virgin, accept my thanks! And you, my lady, you alone will have the merit of my not dying in despair. . . . Only I beseech you, hurry a message to Fra Mariano. . . . Tell me what time it is? day or night? I know no more in what world I am."

"It is five of the clock in the night," answered Vittoria, "and Fra Mariano shall be sent for; but the fright you have had makes you fear more than there need be;

calm yourself, take some rest, my dear young woman; here you are in a safe place; I will not leave you. . . ."

"Oh, no! do not leave me! If you only knew what comfort those compassionating eyes of yours give to my heart when you look at me! Sit down here on my couch; there, I have made room for you; . . . no, no, don't fear to put me to any inconvenience; indeed, I feel more comfortable in this position. . . ." Thus remaining for a while in a kind of stupor, she shuddered again, and apparently wandering, she would say: "If you knew what horrors! To be buried alive; . . . to be smothered under a heap of dead bodies! to see before you those cadaverous faces, sunk by death and doomed to corruption, staring at you, and gr . . . grin! . . . God! I feel as if I was there now! . . ."

And uttering these words, she clung to her protectress, who very justly thinking that it would be useless to attempt to reason while those wanderings of mind continued, pressed her close to her arms, and endeavored to sooth and quiet her.

"O Mia Signora!" Ginevra continued, hiding her head in her friend's bosom, "I do not know what I am saying. I only know I am talking nonsense; but I have been too vilely treated, — too much so! . . . and I did not deserve it! What had I done to him, that he should insult me so? . . . And in yon chapel I felt sure that I would succeed, and reach the place in safety! . . . I prayed so fervently! . . . Ah! but I have been a wretched sinner! . . . more unfortunate than sinful; oh! yes, yes, — much more unfortunate! Because my heart. . . . I know it, and I know how I felt. . . ."

"Yes, dear friend; yes, I believe it," answered Vittoria; "but calm yourself, and do not say that God has

abandoned you; see, He has sent me to dry your tears, and sooth your sufferings. See, I am here with you; I will not leave you; and if it be any satisfaction to you, fear not, I shall not abandon you. But if, in your misfortune, you need help of different nature; if punishment has to be bestowed on any one who has insulted you; if there exists some evil that requires remedy, let me know . . . trust me . . . Fabricio Colonna, my father . . . Gonzalo; . . . in a word, all offer themselves to you. . . ."

"Ah, Mia Signora!" Ginevra replied, "the whole world, were it to combine together, could not afford me the means of enjoying one moment of happiness; nor could they take one drop from the cup of my sorrow! It is all over with me here below. . . . But I thank you! oh, I thank you; because you have afforded me the last relief; . . . and, therefore, do not call me ungrateful, because I do not tell you my sad adventures; it is impossible; they cannot be told; and if I do not accept your offers, . . . may God reward you. . . . *He* can do it! . . . I can only thank you, . . . and kiss those blessed hands which will support my head in my last hour, and will close my eyes. . . . Pledge yourself that you will not leave me until I shall be entirely cold."

Vittoria wished to drive away these ideas by trying to persuade her that there was no danger of death, but Ginevra would not allow her to speak.

"No, no, my lady; it is out of the question; I know to what state I have been brought; I know how I feel; . . . do not refuse me this request, angel of benedictions! Is it not so? You will not deny it? There, you see, I take advantage of your good will; you cannot say that I am either proud or ungrateful. . . . Will you then promise it to me?"

"Yes; yes, dear; I promise it to you, should there be need of it."

"Oh! now I feel more at ease. Now give orders to call Fra Mariano, and then it will be over with me in this world. . . . But give me once more a little water; I feel as if I had burning coals in my heart. . . . Could you remove that light? it dazzles my eyes. Please to pardon so much trouble; it will not last long."

Vittoria having performed these little acts of kindness, sat again on the narrow bed, and in a few moments, Inigo, who had gone for Fra Mariano, and had roused him, appeared at the door, asking whether he could introduce him; and Ginevra said: "Let him come, let him come."

A monk, of tall person, noble bearing, his pale and modest countenance slightly shaded by the hood, then entered the room, and approached the couch, saying: "Jesus Christ be with you, lady." All left, and he remained alone with the sick.

It was at the very first sight evident that all human feelings and worldly pursuits had been long trampled under foot by that religious man, whose noble presence and dignified manners were the index of a noble charity, which is the effect of an appreciation of the august and divine mission of administering comfort and relief to fellow-creatures in distress.

His early life was shrouded in mystery to the people of Barletta, and even of the inmates of the convent of San Dominico; and although he occupied no place of distinction in the order, he was surrounded by a halo of reverence, which was the result of his exemplary life, his great learning, and of a belief that he was the victim of persecution. There was a report, that when a layman he was

one of the first citizens of Florence, of the party of the Piagnoni, which was under the lead of Fra Girolamo Savonarola; and that when conquered by the appeals of that terrible preacher, he had given up the world, and received at his hands the Dominican habit in San Marco. Other more obscure reports were mixed up with these facts, which every one believed as true, — that, to give himself up to God, he had broken ties of the heart, — that the sudden change had been the occasion of great scandal, of great anger, and of vengeance, on the part of the neglected woman, — that through her influence he had been involved in the persecution raised against Savonarola; after the death of the latter, he had with great difficulty saved himself, his superior sending him off in disguise and under an assumed name, to the Convent of Barletta, where, on account of its seclusion and out-of-the-way situation, he lived unknown and undisturbed.

These were the reports about him. But the keenest malevolence could not point to the smallest blemish in his life. The severe doctrines of Savonarola had found in his heart a soil well prepared to receive the seed, and helped by his nature, which would sacrifice every thing before the altar of truth, had borne the fruits of charity and fervid zeal.

The whole party of the Piagnoni had become extinguished with the last flicker of the expiring flames of the fire on which Savonarola had been consumed. Clement VII. had frightened into silence those who were loud in their censures on the abuses of the Medicean court. Fra Mariano, not having been chosen to die for the sake of truth, lived happy in his retreat; he rejoiced in being spared the grief of being an idle witness of evils against which he could not raise his voice.

at this hour of night ; 1
us therefore lose no time
of my God, and of our l

"Life and death," said
of God, and it will ha
whatever lies in your pov
refuse his aid to you."

Having made the sign
prayers prescribed for the
"Now begin."

To unbosom her heart wi
to give an account of her l
her ill-assorted marriage, the
band, and her wanderings fr
rative was often interrupted
at times it was somewhat i
ing equal to the painful task.

"Father! I have been fo
him who was not my husban
to expose myself to the dan
in his goodness has preserve
remiss in my endeavors to a
tain wh

And here she narrated how, in approaching the citadel, she had seen the close interview between him whom she supposed to be Ettore and Elvira, the sight of which overwhelmed her, so that she had fallen senseless to the bottom of the boat, and recovered only to find herself in Valentino's room; and going through all the particulars of the cruel insults and outrages suffered at the hands of the Duke, she burst into tears, with fits of convulsions and despair,—giving utterance to disconnected expressions, which manifested too plainly an incipient aberration of mind.

The good Friar was touched to the heart, and with that prudence which the importance of the case required, employed all the means he could command to calm her, and only partially succeeded after a long time, when nature, being overpowered, gave way to a paroxysm, which left the miserable woman a great deal more exhausted.

"Father!" continued Ginevra in a fainter voice, "is it then possible that God and our Blessed Lady have cursed my sorrow, and rejected my tears? God's vengeance has burst on my head like a thunderclap, just when I felt I could hope for mercy . . . the punishment of my sins has already been terrible . . . but I still fear a worse one . . . I feel that I shall die unpardoned . . . I feel that God has hardened my heart at these last moments . . . I am soon to depart, but I can neither forget that man . . . nor pardon that woman . . . Oh, pray for me! help me! as long as there is a chance, speak to me words of hope . . ."

"Of hope?" answered the Friar. "Do you not know that the God who sends me to you is the same God who purchased your salvation with his death on the cross, and pledges his mercy to you, and pledges it even if you were

laden with the sins of the whole world, unless, however, by despairing of pardon, you should offer insult to his love? And what does he ask of you to deserve that pardon, and to deserve that crown of glory and that joy which shall never end? He only requests you to love him as he has loved you; only to suffer a little for his sake, as he has suffered, and so much more for yours; to forgive those who have injured you, just as he has forgiven those who have lavished upon him insults, outrages, torments, and death. Behold! He is there in heaven waiting for you, and He is anxious to receive you into his open arms, to dry your tears, and turn your grief into a joy that will never fail. The enemy, who counted upon you as a sure prey, cannot bear that you should escape from his hands; he is trying every way to reconquer you; he endeavors to take away from you all hopes; but he shall not succeed. I, the minister of God Eternal" — here he rose to his full height, spreading his hands over Ginevra with solemn authority — "I swear to you by His holy name, that both your pardon and your eternal salvation are already signed in the eternal records, if only with an act of love you know how to purchase an eternal reward. May the divine blood of the Son of God descend upon your soul like the dew from heaven; may it wash every stain from it; may it pour peace and joy into it, and may it obtain for you a keen sorrow for having offended Him who shed it for your sake; may it give you strength and energy to repel and contemn the attacks of the enemy who thirsts after your ruin."

"Oh! my Father!" replied Ginevra, who was overwhelmed with veneration for the words she had just heard, "God speaks through your lips; then I can still hope, and I am not forsaken forever!"

"No, you are not, blessed soul! on the contrary, the more severe the struggle is now, the nobler will your triumph be. But now that God grants you grace and opportunity to know your faults and appreciate his mercies, think not of turning back, but remember what he says: better for them not to have known the ways of righteousness, than to shrink after having known them. *No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.* You cannot banish the recollection of that man from your heart? Now see where you had placed your hopes! from whom you expected comfort and joy! See for whose sake you have contemned the love of your God! For the sake of a man who could not even keep a word, however culpable and profane, which he had pledged to you; for the sake of one who, at the first breath of wind, turned from you, without even caring for you. Thus does the world keep its faith; and still to follow this world, you contemn the infallible promises of the Eternal! And when he makes you aware of the vanity and folly of your desires, you almost grow angry, instead of bowing to the very earth before such a miracle of goodness! You cannot pardon that woman? and in what has she offended you? In the first place, she does not even know you; then she is a free maiden, and she can entertain such thoughts without criminality. Oh! you should rather love her, and respect the instrument employed by the hand of the Lord to work out your salvation! I am a sinner too, and have been such, and have been so unfortunate and foolish as to seek peace of heart in human affection. But God has called me; I obeyed the summons at first with bitterness; but then, oh! what a great reward has God allowed to me for the small sacrifice! What a calm joy to love and be sure

serving God, and ho

Here Ginevra interru

"Oh! yes, you have o

overcome me; yes, I par

I *do* pardon; and I wil

Let her come; I wish to

die; and may they live ha

will have mercy on me in t

The good friar fell on

raising his eyes and hands

et miris modis vocat nos De

of His mercy."

Having thus remained a

arose, blessed, and shrove the

"Then you are really dete

this work of grace?"

"Yes, father, send for her;

breathing my last in the act of

"And God, I say it in his

you; you belong to him; this ho

the mark of your salvation."

The friar was starting to send fo

Ginevra recalled him.

"I have one request to make

not refuse it, if you wi

deed

in the service of the Duke of Nemours,) and tell him that in my last hour I have sought God's pardon, and I beg of him also to pardon me if I have offended him. Tell him that on my death I make oath that my soul is as pure on my going out of this world as it was when he received me from my father. Entreat him not to curse my memory, and to have a mass offered for the repose of my soul."

"God bless you! .... Be tranquil; your wish shall be fulfilled."

"Another favor I would request of you," resumed Ginevra; "I do not know whether it would be right or wrong; but God, who sees the interior of my soul, knows that I do it from good motives. .... I wish you would inquire also after him .... I mean Ettore Fieramosca, who is a lancer in the bands of Signor Prospero .... tell him that I will pray for him — that I pardon him .... that is .... no, say nothing about pardon .... after all, I am not perfectly sure .... it might have been some one else who looked like him .... no, no .... tell him only to take care of his soul .... that now I know how we were both acting wrong .... that he must think of a future life .... that this vanishes away like a mist, and it is myself who tells him so, as I feel the reality of it, and I feel .... I mean .... I mean to say I wish him true happiness. And tell him also that if God, as I hope, will receive me in his goodness, I shall pray for him that he may gain the day, and the honor of the Italian arms be safe in his hands."

Fra Mariano gave a sigh and said: "This also I shall do."

The dying woman remained silent for an instant, and thought of Zorais, her *protegée*, with whom she had been at variance for the last few days. She entreated the

friar to see her in the Monastery of Sant' Orsola, and to carry to her a bracelet with her parting farewell, requesting her to wear it for her sake. She recommended the poor forlorn girl to him, that he might find her an honorable shelter, and above all that he would endeavor to make a Christian of her. Then she continued:

"A last charity I beg of you; and I am sure you will grant it. Have me interred in the subterranean chapel of Sant' Orsola, dressed in the habit of the Monastery. It is a great consolation to me to think that I shall rest near the shrine of Our Lady, who has at last granted my prayer, and put an end to my misery."

"Yes, indeed," replied Fra Mariano, scarcely able to control his tears, "I shall fulfil your wishes in every thing."

Having said this, he went out and called Vittoria Colonna, to whom he addressed himself, lest Ginevra, whose strength was fast failing, should be fatigued by too much speaking, and said:

"Lady! please to see the Lady Elvira, and bring her here; this suffering young woman wishes to speak to her."

Vittoria was taken entirely by surprise, and hesitated for a moment, still she moved away without making any reply, when Ginevra said: "I hope she will pardon me for this trouble, but there is no time to lose."

It was then after five o'clock, and the dance had been brought to an end a few moments before; the halls were becoming deserted; the guests were descending the stairs escorted by the barons of the Spanish army.

Gonzalo had just parted with the Duke of Nemours and his knights, who had taken to their horses, and were on their way towards the French camp, preceded by many blazing torches.

The yard was swarming with people on foot and on horseback; it was a tumult that reëchoed all over the castle. The women sat on the horses behind the gentlemen of their party, after the custom of that age, and thus both the crowd and the noise were diminishing, leaving the yard in a short time deserted, except by a few servants who crossed to and fro in the performance of their different duties. The opening and closing of doors might be heard, and lights appeared and disappeared in the balcony and through the halls; and when at last the clock struck the hour of six, the men on guard at the entrance-gate raised the bridge which led to the square, and the strident noise of its heavy chains had ceased, a dead silence, no more interrupted that night, reigned all over the place.

By this time Vittoria had traversed the hall, where the menials were putting out the lights and arranging the furniture, and reached the rooms to which the Lady Elvira had retired, and where she was then taking off her jewels and ornaments. She found her thus employed, and attended by two maids, who, by her manners, did not appear to satisfy her; she was flurried, her cheeks very red, and one might judge that she was far from being pleased with the evening. When she saw Vittoria, an innate sense, springing perhaps from a hidden remorse, made her think that her friend had come for the purpose of speaking to her on a subject which she did not like to hear mentioned at that moment. Hence she could not well conceal a movement of surprise which betrayed some slight impatience. Vittoria perceived it, but seemed not to notice it, and with great sweetness requested her to delay her retiring to rest for a few minutes, and to accompany her to see Ginevra. She was obliged, there-

fore, to give her friend a brief account of how the dying woman happened to be in the castle; and Gonzalo's daughter, who, with a wild brain, had also a good heart, was happy in granting the request, the more so as she saw things taking a better turn than she expected.

They entered Ginevra's room together, and soon were at her bedside. The beauty of Lady Elvira did not appear to so much advantage when her hair had been arranged with the greatest skill, as it did now when it was flowing in disorder, waving over her neck and shining in long tresses of golden color. Fra Mariano modestly withdrew to one side, and poor Ginevra felt an inward shudder, and gave a sigh, to which the compassion of the good friar's heart responded. Thus remained the three women in silence for a few minutes, when Ginevra, raising herself on her elbow, said:

"Signora! you certainly wonder how I should have dared to trespass upon you, as I am a stranger to you, and you to me; but every allowance is made to one at this pass. Before, however, I speak to you more openly, I must obtain your leave to do so; can I address a few words to you with freedom? Whatever answer you may give me, it will, within a few moments, be forever buried in the grave; but may I speak in the presence of this lady, or do you prefer that we were alone?"

"Oh!" answered the Lady Elvira, "this is the dearest friend I have, and she loves me even more than I deserve; so say whatever you wish, my dear lady, because I am here to listen to you."

"If it is so, then, and by your leave, I will request you to answer me only one question."

But as she came to this, as it were to summon strength and to lead the way to the question which she did not

know how to put in words, she remained silent for a moment. The resolution of pardoning the one who had been the occasion of her desperate grief, had been made in great sincerity; but none will be found so severe as to charge her with sin, because the devoted woman, at the moment she was to become certain that her eyes had not deceived her, and that the youth at the feet of the Lady Elvira was actually Ettore, felt an invincible reluctance to obtain this certainty. Where can the heart be found that could blame her for nurturing a vague hope that she had been deceived, and that Ettore was after all the same as ever?

However, be that as it may, our opinion is that those feelings were not entirely overcome, and hence arose the short hesitation which caused that moment of silence.

But at last she spoke resolutely, and with clear, emphatic words:

"Tell me, then, and forgive me if I dare to ask so much: were you not this evening on the balcony over the sea, about three o'clock, and was it not Ettore Fieramosca who knelt at your feet?"

This question, so pointed as well as unexpected, startled the two maidens, but from different causes. The cheeks of the Lady Elvira reddened like two burning coals, and she could not utter a word. Ginevra kept her eyes riveted upon her, and understood the whole at once; her blood curdled in her veins, as she spoke again, but with faltering voice:

"Lady! I am too bold, I know it; but see, I am dying, and I beseech you for that pardon, which we all hope in another world; do not deny me this favor; answer me: was it you? . . . was it he? . . .

The Lady Elvira was bewildered; she turned a timid

glance to Vittoria, who, reading in that look the fear of her own severity, and knowing that it was not then the place or time to show it, embraced her friend, and without speaking endeavored to inspire her with confidence.

Ginevra felt an increasing agony while that hesitation lasted; she outstretched her open and trembling hands to the maiden, and with a husky voice, almost like a cry of despair, she added: —

"Well, then? . . ."

The Lady Elvira, frightened, drew closer to her friend, lowered her eyes and said:

"Yes . . . we were . . ."

The face of the most unhappy Ginevra underwent a change, as if it had become emaciated all at once; but with great effort she rose and set up in the bed, took the Lady Elvira by the hand, drew her nearer, threw both her arms around her neck, and said: "May God bless you, then, and make you both happy!"

But the last word was scarcely audible; and perhaps, before it had been entirely articulated, her soul had departed to receive the reward of victories the most arduous, we believe, to be achieved by a woman on earth, and of a pardon the most magnanimous that can ever be granted by a human heart.

Her arms, which were entwined around Elvira's neck, lost their power, and fell together with the inanimate body on the couch. Her countenance assumed in one instant the color and the semblance of death; the two maidens perceived it, and gave a piercing shriek. The friar remained breathless; at last, joining his hands, he said: "That is a heavenly countenance." Then they all knelt in prayer, and implored from God eternal rest to that soul, which needed it so much. They composed her

hands over her bosom, and Fra Mariano, having entwined the rosary he took from his belt between her fingers, placed a light at the foot of the bed, and said: *Requiescat in pace;* and then led the two young ladies out of that sad place. Returning to the bed, he remained by the corpse, occupied in prayer during the hours that remained until daylight.

Among the various motives, that led Gonzalo to grant his consent to the challenges between the Spaniards and the French, and the Italians and the French, the most important of all was to gain time for the arrival of the reinforcements which were expected from Spain by sea. Deprived as he was of them, and too inferior in strength to the French army, he had been forced to keep close within the walls of Barletta, and had never been able to engage in any affair of importance. But during that day, in which he had entertained the French barons at his castle, he had received letters announcing the arrival of vessels laden with soldiers, which had already doubled the Cape of Reggio, and would not be long in landing at Barletta. Feeling, therefore, that it would be improvident to let too much time be wasted in this way, and that it was of paramount importance not to damp the ardor of his men, who would feel elated by the arrival of new troops, he contrived, in his conversation with the Duke of Nemours and others of the French, to prevail on them to appoint a day as near as possible. It was, therefore, agreed that the passage-at-arms between the Spaniards and the French should take place on the day after the ball, on a spot along the sea-shore, about half a mile out of the gate that leads to Bari; and that the

Italians should fight on the third day, in a place already chosen by Brancaleone and Prospero Colonna, near the village of Quarato, half-way between Barletta and the French camp.

The champions of both parties, having been informed by their leaders of the new arrangements, betook themselves to get ready at once. Those of the French who were to take part in the field, left the dancing hall before the rest, and repaired to their camp to give such orders as were necessary for the battle; and the Spaniards also returned to their quarters to make their preparations, and to take some rest before daybreak. Inigo and Brancaleone heard the news, when, having laid Ginevra in the room whence she would not go out alive, they had gone to call Fra Mariano; and the former, being one of the combatants, in order to arrange matters, had been obliged to leave to his companion the charge of waiting on Fieramosca, and aiding him in his troubles. They pressed each others' hands as they separated, and Inigo remarked: —

"I cannot, for the life of me, see how he can fight day after to-morrow, when he could not keep on his feet this evening!"

Brancaleone gave no answer, but shook his head, bit his lower lip, and showed, by his look, how fully he felt the remark of the Spaniard. He then left, and going to the harbor, took a boat, and hastened to the Monastery with all speed, to tell Ettore the result of his researches.

But before we tell our readers in what state he found his friend, whom he had left in such a miserable plight, we are obliged, by anticipating the course of events, to give an account of what happened the following day, and of the result of the challenge given by the Spaniards.

The sun had already been for one hour above the horizon when the eleven champions of each side stood opposite to each other in the lists. Inigo, Azevedo, Correa, old Sagredo, and Don Garcia de Paredes, were the most renowned among the Spaniards. The rest, although of inferior note, were all good soldiers, and skilful horsemen. Pedro Navarro had been appointed by Don Gonzalo marshal of the day. On the French side, this charge had been given to Monseigneur de Pelisse, who had among his men Bayard, the pride of all the armies of those days. The battle was for a long time equally successful on both sides. Sagredo at last, had both the reins of his bridle, which he held very tight, cut in twain, and was carried at full speed out of the lists. This, being one of the chances foreseen in the laws of tournaments, was considered a defeat, and he to whom it happened was bound to surrender. Good Sagredo, perceiving that the horse was near leaping over the bounds marked all around by huge stones, threw himself from the horse; but, both from the difficulty of the leap, and from having his limbs stiffened by age, he fell on his knees; still he held his ground, and bravely defended himself against two men on horseback. But his sword was shattered, and with no other arms at his disposal, and unable to take shelter among his companions who were at too great a distance, he was compelled to surrender. However, he came out with great honor, was accompanied by shouts of acclamations, and great sympathy was felt for his misfortune. The battle continued after this accident, and at a time it seemed that fortune was leaning towards the Spanish; many of the French had their horses killed. Here we must call the attention of our readers to the fact, that in spite of the old laws of tournaments, it was

often customary to agree beforehand that they might wound their horses, for the purpose of better showing the address of the combatants, and also to give it the better appearance of true battle, in which seldom, if ever, this courtesy was allowed. After two hours of hard fighting, the marshals ordered the heralds to sound the trumpets, thus to separate the bands and grant them a brief respite.

The Spaniards were all still mounted, and of their number the only one missing was Sagredo. On the French side, one had been made prisoner, and on this score they were equal; but there were seven of their horses slain on the ground. Bayard, however, was still in his saddle. After half an hour of rest, the fighting was resumed, and in spite of the efforts on the part of the Spaniards, their adversaries maintained themselves, as it were, intrenched behind the dead horses, over which those of the Spaniards, no matter how sharply spurred on, would never trample. Therefore, after much useless struggling, the French offered to desist, and proclaim the honors of the day equal on both sides.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The obstinate defence on the part of the French, and the difficulty of conquering them entirely, entrenched as they were behind the corpses of their steeds, made the majority of the Spaniards feel disposed to accept the proposal. But Diego Garcia would not listen to it; panting with rage, he shouted with a voice of thunder to his companions, that it was a shame to retire before men half conquered, and that the battle should be carried by making them feel that the Spaniards were their superiors, both on foot and on horseback; and having no other arms besides his sword, which could not reach them, he would stoop down in his fury, and lifting those large stones which marked the bounds, and which could have been scarcely moved by a man of ordinary strength, he flung them in the midst of the opposite squad. But it was not a difficult task to avoid being struck by them; so even this manœuvre had no effect. Nevertheless, the battle was rekindled, and it lasted until the sun was near setting beyond the horizon; and as the French maintained their position with admirable address, it became necessary for both parties to desist. The judges awarded to both parties the honors of the day, rendering to the Spaniards the praise of more valor, and to the French that of more perseverance. The prisoners were exchanged; and the champions of the two nations, op-

pressed with fatigue, panting, and well bruised, left the lists, one band for the camp, the other for the town.

When the Spaniards entered the gates of Barletta, it was near night. They alighted at the castle, and being admitted to the presence of Gonzalo, they gave an account of the fortunes of the day. The great Captain was greatly offended, and reproached them, because, having begun so well, they had not kept their advantage to the end. The noble nature of Diego Garcia shone here in all its lustre. He who, even on the battle field, had rebuked those of his companions who would leave the affair incompleted, here — in the presence of Gonzalo — undertook to defend them boldly, protesting that they had behaved as became the true men they were, and had attained their purpose, which was to make the French acknowledge that they were equally as valiant on horseback as the former boasted to be. But Gonzalo did not receive this plea well, and cutting the words short with the remark — *Por mejores os embié yo al campo,** — he dismissed them.

We will now resume the thread of events, narrating what happened to Brancaleone on the evening before, after he had left Inigo to go to Fieramosca.

When he landed at the island of Sant' Orsola, the anxiety which he had felt to make a quick passage had been sobered down by thinking how he should break the news of Ginevra's condition. Slowly he ascended the steps which led to the terrace of the convent, and having arranged his ideas, he went to the strangers' rooms. But he found that the speech he had prepared would

* *I sent you for better. Prescott's translation. Ferd. and Isab. chap. xi.*

be of no use. Entering the room, he saw Zorais sitting at the head of the bed, and beckoning to him with her hand to step lightly, lest he might disturb Ettore, who was in a profound sleep. He gently withdrew while the young woman rose, and having glanced at Fieramosca, saw that he was still enjoying a tranquil rest, and with a soft step she followed Brancaleone to one of the adjoining rooms.

"All right," said Zorais. "To-morrow Ettore will be as well as ever. But Ginevra, where is she? — have you found her out?"

On hearing the good news about Fieramosca, Brancaleone began to breathe freely, and answered: —

"Ginevra is at the castle, in good hands, and you will be able to see her very soon. But tell me, — will Ettore then be really well? Will he be able to fight? We must fight the day after to-morrow."

"Yes, he *shall* fight."

There was a kind of mysterious expression in the manner of Zorais, and Brancaleone felt his curiosity much excited. He was anxious to be more particularly informed in regard to the nature of the sickness of his friend; but she only answered that he had been slightly wounded in the neck, and said nothing of the stiletto being poisoned. Nevertheless, perceiving that the woman did not give straightforward answers, he continued to question her, but could not succeed in obtaining any more precise information.

"There is a fable with us in the east," said Zorais, with a mournful smile, "that a lion in the desert once had his life saved by a mouse. I shall tell you no more; and suffice it for you to know that within a few hours Ettore's arm will be as strong as the neck of a

wild bull. The only thing to be done now is to let him rest in perfect quiet; to-morrow he will awake in time to get ready for the battle. I shall now go back to him to be ready for any thing he may want. Trust him to me. I understand the art of curing wounds, and have healed some far worse than this."

Brancaleone perceiving that there was nothing more to be done for his friend, begged of Zorais that when Ettore awoke, she would reassure him in regard to Ginevra; tell him that the battle was to take place the day after; that he should return to the convent at mid-day, if he did not see him in the city before that hour. Having thus arranged matters, he returned to Barletta, where, before going home, he wished to go to the castle to know what had become of Ginevra. But he found the gate closed, and the bridge raised; hence he was compelled to wait until the following day.

At daybreak he hurried to the castle, and met the eleven Spanish champions emerging from it, on their way to the lists, and followed by all who were free to go, so that very few had remained in the castle. He ascended the stairs, but met no person from whom he could obtain any information. He reached the door of the room where he had left Ginevra the evening before, and knocked. Fra Mariano, who had spent the night there, opened, and taking him into an adjoining room, told Brancaleone all that had happened.

The sad news grieved and distressed the mind of Brancaleone, because this direful misfortune fell upon his friend when he was the least prepared to bear it, and when he stood in need of his whole energy to meet the approaching engagement. He was afraid lest, being overcome by his grief, he might not be equal to a trial

so arduous and so important. He therefore agreed with the friar, that it was expedient to keep Ginevra's death concealed from Ettore all that day; and that he would on the morrow himself take the charge of carrying the corpse to the convent, according to her wishes, while Ettore would be engaged in the passage-at-arms. They did not apprehend much difficulty in keeping the event secret during that day, when the castle was almost deserted; and thought necessary to inform of it only Gonzalo, that he might grant the necessary help to transfer the body, and to have the funeral performed with honor.

As Fieramosca must have some explanation, they agreed that Brancaleone should tell him that Ginevra was well — that she could not see him that day — that she only wished to remind him of the honor of Italy, hoping that he would fight with that valor which such a cause deserved — and she would pray for him and his companions. All this could be said in all truth, and it was such a message as to give him comfort and nerve before approaching the battle.

Having thus settled this most important part of the affair, Brancaleone went to the square, and having entered the quarters of the Colonnas, he met them both in the yard, where they had assembled the thirteen Italians, and most minutely examined the armor, the harness, and the horses, in order that every thing might be in readiness on the following day, and that every part of the equipments should be tried beforehand.

Brancaleone, who had knowledge of the meeting, had sent thither his attendants, and those of Fieramosca, with their horses and armor. But their owner was not there, and the only answer given to the inquiries was, that nobody had seen him.

Prospero Colonna heard the news with amazement, which soon changed into anger. Therefore, when Brancaleone made his appearance, he asked, with great severity of manner: —

"And where is Fieramosca; — why does he not come?"

"Eccellenza!" answered Brancaleone, "he will be here in a few moments. His delay is not voluntary. . . . A sudden occurrence, and of very grave nature . . . ."

"What can there be of more importance than to-morrow's business? I did not imagine that he could have any other affair at heart just now."

Fanfulla, remembering the incidents of the previous evening, wished to give the conversation a turn that might afford him an opportunity to speak of them, and remarked with a smile: —

"Eh! he must have danced too much last night, or he must have found some new nail to drive off that old one; and then of course it is not very pleasant to rise too early."

"He has found the plague that may God send to thee," replied Brancaleone. "Thou believest every one as mad as thyself? I assure you, Eccellenza, on my honor, he will be here instantly; and I will go myself to hurry him on."

He thought this would be the best, because, although assured by Zorais, he feared lest some new accident had happened. He went to the harbor to take another trip to the island. Having entered a boat, just as he was dipping the oar, he saw another doubling the mole, and to his great joy he saw Ettore, who hastened towards him, and leaping on the shore, said: —

"Where is Ginevra? is she sick? what has happened to her? quick, quick, let us go to her."

"Quick, quick to the Colonnas instead; they are only waiting for you. Ginevra is well, and you shall see her afterwards."

"Well, I am glad that she is well; but let us go to her."

"But did not Zorais tell you that the battle comes off to-morrow?"

"Yes, she did; but now, in God's name, bring me to Ginevra . . ."

"You cannot see her now, nor to-day either . . ."

"And I say . . ."

"But if you do not listen to me, and give me a chance to speak, we shall never come to any conclusion. You must then know — and all this I tell you in her own name, not that I have seen her, but she has given orders that I should take this message to you — that she is well, Signora Vittoria has taken care of her, looks to her comfort, and has rendered to her those affectionate services which her case needed, so that she wants nothing. She wishes you not to think of anything else to-day, and not to see her; — that you should keep yourself calm, fight to-morrow as it becomes you, not forget the honor of Italy, and bear in mind all that you have so often spoken together on this subject; and she will pray to God for your victory . . ."

"But, oh! why can I not see her? . . . I fear there is something wrong in this matter."

"And I say to you that there is nothing wrong; if I wished to tell you how the tumult of yesterday ended, I could not, because I don't know it myself; but in heaven's name let this be enough for the present, to know that she is safe; we shall have leisure to know all the rest after the battle, and we have no time now to think of any thing else. Let us go: Signor Prospero and the rest are wait-

ing for us; they have been asking of you, and some of them are amazed at your conduct, that you should not be with them at this hour. Come, have courage! You have always been a man! and it is really shameful to trample now under foot the honor and fame of the great soldier you have always maintained."

"Let us go, yes, let us go," Fieramosca replied with a slight show of impatience; "I am not a horse that needs so much spurring. I only requested you to let me see her for one instant; will this make the world crumble to atoms?"

"The world will not come to a crash . . . but can't you understand that they are all there, on parade, and that you are the only one wanted . . . what *must* they think of this?"

"Well then," rejoined Fieramosca, hastening his steps,—they had made little headway during the above dialogue, as one wanted to go to the castle, while the other endeavored to drag him to the Colonnas,—"well, let us go, you spoke truly . . . duty and honor before every thing else."

And as they were hurrying along, Brancaleone addressed him the following questions:—

"Well then, by the by, how dost thou feel?—the wound? . . ."

"Oh! it is nothing . . . I will tell thee all by and by . . . I have no time now . . . What deviltry! and that poor Zorais! she would not tell me any thing; but I know it all . . . I could judge from the great sufferings I had . . . The stiletto must have been poisoned . . . I hope she has not sucked the wound . . . and perilled her health, perhaps her life . . . but alas! I fear it will be the case . . . But I was so much bewildered that I cannot remember whether it was a fact or a dream I went through."

"But after all, you are well now? . . . "

"As if I had never been sick."

And saying this, they had entered the yard, and stood before Prospero Colonna, who, after a few remarks about Fieramosca's delay, proceeded in the inspection in which he was engaged.

The examination was so minute that it lasted several hours. They tried the horses as to their strength; they tried the armor with lance, battle-axe, and sword. The offensive weapons were wielded upon wood and iron; the least flaw or straining would condemn them; and the less perfect were rejected. About mid-day, when all returned to their lodgings, only Ettore was detained under pretence of arranging some particulars regarding the challenge, but in fact for the purpose of not allowing him any time to follow his own inclinations. Brancaleone had drawn Signor Prospero aside, acquainted him with what had happened, and requested him to arrange matters so that Fieramosca should be kept busy the whole day, and it was done accordingly. At night, when there could be no reasonable pretext for detaining him, he was dismissed, and Brancaleone accompanied him home, talking all the time about the profession of arms, and how they should act the following day with the enemy; and so well did he succeed in engaging the attention of his friend, that the latter had no chance of allowing his imagination to wander after the object towards which his heart was so irresistibly drawn. As they traversed the square, they met the band of the Spanish champions returning from the lists, and stopping to greet them and to hear the result of the battle, they tarried so long that it was late in the night when they went home.

"These *diables* of Frenchmen have tough skins,"

remarked Ettore, in taking leave of his friend; "and the Spaniards have got meat for their teeth."

"So much the better," answered Brancaleone; "we will have to do with men; it is not for nothing that we follow to the Colonna banner. For my part, I hope I'll do the work of two to-morrow. Just imagine what those ribalds of the Orsini would say, should we be beaten! That great poltroon of the Count of Pitigliano! would he not enjoy it! . . . but this time, I trust, he will not have this pleasure."

"No, no!" Fieramosca replied; "and perhaps some of these Frenchmen will regret that they have ever tasted the figs of Puglia. Well! let us go to rest now, and on the morrow we will show that if the wretched Italians are incessantly outraged, it is because an accursed fate weighs upon them; but after all, take man to man, we fear neither them nor the world. Goodby, Brancaleone. I know what thou wishest to say," he added with a smile; "fear not—until to-morrow evening I shall think of nothing else but of the business we have on hand; and I swear to thee that my blood is a great deal more hot to-day than when the challenge was accepted; and I trust that neither Italy nor you will have occasion to be ashamed of me."

"I am quite sure of that," answered Brancaleone. "To-morrow."

"To-morrow," replied Fieramosca, presenting his hand, and they parted.

Fieramosca wanted to have a look at the stable before he went up to his quarters; and having entered it, he began to caress his good battle horse with that affection, and I might say friendship, which every soldier feels for the companion of his labors and of his dangers. He

softly patted his neck and his shoulders; and the noble steed drawing his ears back, shook his head, and in his play feigned to bite his master.

"My poor Airone, eat away, and have good cheer as long as there is a chance; it is not sure thou shalt enjoy this stall to-morrow eve. . . . For any other business I would take Boccanera, and I would not risk thy skin; but to-morrow I really need to bestride thee. I am sure, thou wilt not lose thy footing; I know that. And then," he added with a laugh, and taking the mouth of the horse between his hands, "thou also art an Italian, and thou also must needs carry thy cross."

Having then examined every thing, and being satisfied that all was right, "Masuccio," he said, calling on his squire, "give him water at four o'clock, and then as many oats as he can eat; come up to arm me at five."

These orders being given, he went up stairs; after a few minutes the light was put out, and he found himself in bed with the firm resolution of going to sleep and rest. At first he felt as if he might easily sleep; but first one thought presented itself to his mind, then another, and another, and he had been already lying for several hours without closing an eye for one moment. After the words of Brancaleone, he had made his mind easy in regard to the case of Ginevra; but the case now presented itself enveloped in darkness and suspicion; a swarm of indistinct fears crowded around his heart. "It must be a very strange mystery that I must not know it until to-morrow! would Brancaleone deceive me?"

Once he felt an impulse in his heart even to curse the challenge; but the thought was driven away with high disdain, even before it had been half formed.

"Oh, for shame! shame!" he exclaimed, sitting up

in his bed; "how could I harbor such baseness in my heart! . . . I am not the man I once was. What would Ginevra say were she to know how sadly changed I am, and how cold I have grown towards those deeds which formerly would have set the very blood of my veins on fire."

These thoughts passing through his mind made him angry with himself, so much so that rising in a fury, he dressed himself, and left the bed, which affording no sleep had become irksome. He went out on the terrace, and seated himself on the little stony guard in which he was so often wont to sit, under the palm tree, resolved there to remain waiting for the break of day, which was now fast approaching.

The moon, pale and crescent, was mirrored in the calm waters. At about five hundred yards on the left, the Rock arose, scarcely visible at that hour, and appeared like a huge dark heap of stones, the merlons alone being discernible over the towers against the heavens. Ettore's eye was riveted on those walls, and his heart throbbed, thinking of her who was kept within them; and he imagined he heard from time to time a distant murmur like the alternate reading of psalms. But the sound came from so far, that he could not distinctly understand its nature and meaning. Through a window, which being open on a side of the castle he could only see obliquely, a light appeared burning the whole night. He would fain have given his blood not to see that lamp any more, and he turned his eyes another way, saying, — "I am very silly to torture my mind with such imaginations;" but the eyes would revert to the window in spite of himself, and there stood that light still burning.

Very often does man deal with himself in bad faith,

when he is a prey to harassing misgivings. This was the case with Ettore. He endeavored to persuade himself of what his mind would by no means believe, that all was right with Ginevra, — that nothing evil had happened to her, and that the mystery which he could not but observe in the circumstances, was only a fancy of his, and the effect of a diseased imagination. And if he essayed all this mental labor to deceive himself, he did so because he knew that he could not concentrate all the energies of his mind upon the subject of the forthcoming battle, except by assuming the probability if not the certainty of that which his calmer reason represented to be a mere illusion.

"Oh! yes, yes," he would say to himself with a shaking of the head, and passing his hand over his brow and hair, as if to drive away the thoughts which were crowding upon his mind; "let us take care of our honor before every thing else . . . and to-morrow, perhaps, by this time I shall have said to her, *Ginevra, we have won the battle;*" . . . then, as a new thought arose in his mind, "perhaps she will have seen me carried into Barletta on a bier, and remarked, *Poor Ettore, thou hast done thy best!* . . . And if it should happen so? then I shall have died like a good man and true. She will weep over me; but she could never bear that I should live at the price of cowardice; aye, she would feel proud in saying, *we were friends from childhood* . . . true! . . . but then she will live alone, without friends; and she does not even know that her husband is living in the French camp . . . but if she knew it, how could she present herself after so long a time?"

Ettore had formed in his mind, and partly carried out, the resolution of recommending her to Brancaleone; but

then thinking that he might also fall in the lists, he resolved to write a letter to Prospero Colonna, with directions that the little property he had in Capua, viz: a house and a small farm, together with his horses, their equipments, amounting to several thousand ducats, should be given to Maria Ginevra Rossi, of Monreale. He relighted the lamp, and in a few moments the letter was written. Then he thought to enclose therein one for Ginevra, as if to take leave, and to recommend to her care the Saracen maiden, to whom he felt grateful for so many reasons; and as it was the hour of cockcrowing, and the men were already stirring in the stable, having very little time, he only wrote these few lines: —

"Ginevra, — I am on the moment of mounting my horse; and I cannot say that I shall alight from it at night alive. If it has been otherwise determined in heaven, I am sure that after having bestowed a tear on him who, from childhood, has been thy faithful friend and servant, thou wilt rejoice that I have met a death, than which none can be imagined either more glorious or more enviable. Enjoy, for my sake, the little property that belongs to me; thou knowest that I am free, and without near kindred. I only request thee, and I need not waste many words on it, to befriend my servant Masuccio, who, from the day he was wounded on the shoulder at Olfanto, cannot help himself much; and without some help from thee, he might be reduced to beg his way through life; which would be a poor honor to my memory. One thing more. Thy husband is alive, and serves in the army of the Duke of Nemours. I have no more time. I hear them stirring at the Colonna-quarters. God guard thee in his keeping. I recommend Zorais also to thee.

"ETTORE."

And, in fact, the trumpeter was heard making those flourishes, short and broken, which are the usual prelude before sounding the reveille. A certain swelling noise, and a subdued bustling issuing from the ground-rooms of Ettore's and the adjoining houses, voices undistinguished, and the tread of men and horses over the pavement, plainly announced that both the actors and the spectators of the forthcoming passage-at-arms were bestirring themselves. The skies, however, had not yet given any sign of break of day; on the contrary, a dingy mist concealed the stars, and rendered the atmosphere very heavy.

Fieramosca perceived the appearance of the sky as he was on the moment of sealing the two letters which he had written before the open window, out of which he saw the slanting light from his lamp illuminating that portion of the atmosphere it struck upon. The gloomy appearance of the weather increased that sadness which had already taken possession of his heart; and what between the bats, which, attracted by the light, fled with swift and tremulous wings to and fro before his window, and the watches on the towers calling in mournful tones the hour for change of guards, the natural melancholy of the hour was increased, and the devoted youth felt for a moment oppressed by it. But the heavy and sounding tread of two men, who, having ascended the steps, were entering his room, made him lift his countenance and put on a cheerful and bold look, so that they might not notice the actual state of his feelings.

Brancaleone, encased in his armor except his head, was followed by Masuccio who carried Fieramosca's armor. The bell from San Dominico's steeple tolled the hour of mass, at which the combatants were to assist before departing for the lists.

"Put on thy arms, Ettore, because they will be all in the church in a few moments," was Brancaleone's greeting; and suiting the action to the words, with the help of Masuccio, he had in a few moments covered his friend with the perfect and shining armor which he used to wear on occasions of great solemnity. It was from the hands of one of the most skilful workmen of Milan; it fitted the well formed person of the knight, and it had been so skilfully put together at the joints, that it displayed, without the least alteration, the graceful features of the body, allowing him at the same time the free and easy motion of his limbs. As he had completed arming himself, and had girded the sword on his left, and the dagger on the right, they both went down stairs, followed by their menials who carried helmets and bucklers, and led the horses. They entered San Dominico, where, in a few minutes, the twelve champions, with Prospero Colonna at their head, arrived, surrounded by a throng of people.

The form of the church was quadrangular; there were three naves, separated by columns on which groined arches were poised. Near the chancel two lateral extensions gave it the appearance of a cross. According to the ancient style, the stalls for the monks were in two ranges on each side and in front of the altar, and were carved in wood, highly ornamented with foliage and fretwork, which, from old age, had acquired a shining and darkish hue. In the centre of the choir was set a long kneeling bench, fitted up for thirteen occupants, and on it knelt the Italian men-at-arms. The light of day was increasing, but it was not as yet so light as to make its way through the thick stained glass which filled the narrow Gothic windows; hence the main body of the

church was almost entirely enveloped in darkness, and the reddish lights from the altar only faintly gleamed over the breast plates of the warriors, leaving every other figure almost invisible. Prospero Colonna, sheathed in his armor, stood a little in advance of the rest, and had at his feet, to kneel upon, a cushion of red velvet on which a column had been richly embroidered in silver, and had been carried by two pages, who stood at a little distance from him. Mass was commenced, and Fra Mariano was officiating. Any heart that was capable of generous and magnanimous feelings, could not remain untouched at the sight of those valiant and bold Italian young warriors, who bent their brows, furrowed by fatigue and the sword, before the God of armies, beseeching of Him to grant to their weapons virtue and strength to conquer those who wished to drag in the mire the Italian name.

Their bearing expressed the religious feelings swelling in their hearts, albeit the constant practise of military drill gave them even then a look of boldness. On the left hand, at the extreme end of the bench, stood Fieramosca, upright, motionless, with his arms crossed on his breast. The door of the vestry opened before him; and the servants of the church, who were passing to and fro on errands of their office, might have easily annoyed him in his prayers; but a scene was enacted within the sacristy, and a conversation carried on, which could not but deeply affect a mind most sadly preoccupied.

A man, dressed in a long robe of dark color, stood in the midst of the vestry addressing a brother of the order of San Dominico, and requesting him: —

"Which one must I get ready; that for the poor, or the one used for the quality?"

"Of course, the best," answered the Dominican; "you know that it is Signor Gonzalo who pays the expenses."

The servant moved away; Fieramosca lost sight of him, but heard his footsteps as he entered what seemed to be a closet; then silence reigned for a few minutes; then again he heard the same footsteps coming back, and something dragging on the stone floor. The same man reappeared, drawing after him, and leaving in the midst of the sacristy a black bier ornamented with galloons of silver, over which he threw a huge pall of black velvet. When the undertaker had prepared every thing, he went away, and there stood the bier in the centre of the room.

Fieramosca never had any idea for whom that dismal article was destined, and if the suspicion had entered his mind, he would have banished it as a foolish thought; still he could not take his eyes from it during the whole service. His thoughts were naturally bent on the probability that it might be the last day of his life, and he turned his heart with renewed fervor to beg pardon of the Lord for the sins of his life. He passed under review the whole length of time from the night he had rescued Ginevra in Santa Cecilia; and he felt reproached only because he had not told her that Graiano was alive. However of this sin, as well as of all others, he had been shriven the night previous. He felt great ease and calmness in his heart, and he felt that he could meet death without fear.

When mass was over, the thirteen followed Prospero Colonna to his quarters, where they sat down to breakfast.

One of the conditions sworn to by the French as well as by the Italian party was, that any man-at-arms who, being made a prisoner, did not wish to follow his con-

queror, might be ransomed with arms and horse, by the disbursement of a hundred ducats. Every one of the Italian champions deposited the sum in the hands of Signor Prospero; and the thirteen hundred ducats were placed on the sumpter mules, which were sent in advance to the field with refreshments and equipage that might be wanted.

Breakfast being over, the champions went to the citadel, where the great Captian was waiting for them in the dancing hall. They took leave of him with few words and a serene countenance. And he dismissed them, inviting them to be at supper with him, remarking that he would have the tables ready for twenty-six persons, so that if the French should have forgotten to carry with them the ransom price, they should not be obliged to go to bed with empty stomachs.

Then they descended into the yard, where the horses were held in readiness by their attendants, and, two abreast, began their march, the band preceding them, and followed by their friends and a crowd of idle spectators.

CHAPTER XIX.

At an equal distance from Barletta and the French camp, the land slopes gently from the foot of the hills down to a level bottom of about one thousand feet square, surrounded by swelling mounds, most probably of alluvial formation. The ground is formed of small gravel and silicious sand, entirely free from weeds and shrubs, and affords a solid and sure tread to the horse's foot. Such was the place chosen for the combat. On the day previous, men had been dispatched there to level the inequalities of the surface. The bounds were set by a trench and large stones placed all around. On the brow of a hill which commanded a view of the place, under the shade of immense holms, the stand for the judges was erected, with flags white and vermilion hanging from the branches. Twenty-six lances with the shields of the men-at-arms of the two nations, and their names posted on placards with large letters, were placed in front of this tribunal. Curiosity had drawn together an immense throng of Signorotti and peasants from towns and villages all around, and every high place in the environs was taken possession of long before sunrise. Spectators of any note above the rest sat with old folks and women on the green sward; boys, poor people, and urchins had climbed on the tops of trees, and their faces and garments were strongly contrasted with the green foliage amidst which they were

perched. It was a beautiful sight especially for those who, situated at one end of the camp, had the inland behind them, and looked over the basin of the harbor — such a rich rural scene, enlivened by such a crowd with so much stir and life! — On the right the majestic clumps of oaks, the dark hue of their leaves shading with the lively and gay green of smaller wood; — on a plain far beyond the forest stood the town of Quarato, of which only the gates were visible as they were guarded by a tower built on the projection of rocks, at the foot of which the road is winding in its course; — in the centre of the field and beyond the Adriatic shore the city and castle of Barletta, and the colored forms of the buildings standing in bold relief over the blue tint of the waters, — farther away still the bridge and island of Sant' Orsola, and the peaks of Gargano, bounded by the line of the horizon; — then at the left the hills gently rising to a great height, — and opposite to the judges' stand, on an uneven ground, carpeted with fresh grass, clumps of gigantic oaks, covered with ivy, and in the full vigor of a luxuriant growth. A fog that had been lowering during the night was chased away by the dawn, and floated in the upper regions of the atmosphere in clouds of fantastic appearance, reflecting already the golden rays of the rising sun. Broad streaks of more dense fog still remained gracefully poised over the plains, like so many beds of the whitest down, and surmounted here and there by clumps of taller trees and hill-tops. An orange tint was diffused from the solar disk not yet emerged from the sea, stilling the terrestrial objects in silent quietude, as they were illumined only by the reflection of the atmosphere. The spectator's eye was drawn almost unconsciously toward the place of the rising sun. On the farthest limit of the

sea, a spark of the most brilliant light seemed to be ignited; it increased, it took a determined form, and the sun in its majesty like a globe of fire arose, expanding its rays, giving shape and color to the objects, and doubled by reflection from the waters.

A squad of soldiers on foot, placed here at a very early hour, kept the ground free from the people who had gathered in groups all around, and were crowding more densely in the neighborhood where venders of refreshments and wine had pitched their tents and placed seats and tables. Among the rest the reader might recognize Venom, the keeper of the tavern of The Sun, who had already fixed his ambulatory establishment in one of the most conspicuous spots, under a temporary arbor, to which many of the soldiers, his regular customers, had already resorted. He had two or three large frying-pans, heated on portable iron stoves; a table made of rough boards joined together, and supported by short poles driven in the ground which stood in the place of legs, was crowded with huge baskets filled with fish, artichokes, and every kind of vegetable. There he was, with two aprons and a white cap, all fresh from the laundry, with his shirt sleeves tucked up to the shoulder, holding under his left arm a long-handed pipkin, filled with flour, for the purpose of frying, and in one hand a plate with raw fish, in the other the pinchers to take hold of it. He was all in a bustle to prepare that dish so much liked by the southern people of Italy. He never stopped the jabber of his tongue. He laughed, put and answered questions, all in one breath; and only now and then he broke the conversation either to sing *La Bella Franceschina*, or to halloo at the top of his voice: "O! what sardines! — What sardines! O! —

The mullets are alive! — Have you no eyes, or have you no money!" and the like urging appeals, which were heard at half a mile's distance. At last, a noise from those who were more elevated made all heads look in that direction, and the news passed around that the French champions were in sight. In a few minutes they appeared on a turn of the road, which led from behind a hill. They soon reached the enclosure, and entering the lists, arranged themselves in a file on the superior part of the camp, with their faces turned towards the sea. The warriors, and some one hundred companions and friends who had joined the train, dismounted, leaving the horses with their squires and grooms. Then they went up to the judges' stand, and loitered away under the holms, waiting for the arrival of the Italians. These were heralded by a whirlwind of dust which arose on the road from Barletta, from the midst of which, however, the flash of their arms could be seen. Indeed, it was not their intention to keep their antagonists long waiting. The crowds which up to this time had been roaming about began to draw near the palisade, contending for the most advanced places, although the soldiers on guard forced the swelling crowd back, with such persuasive arguments as on such occasions are at the command of the soldiery — in the form of the handles of their pickaxes, or of the butts of their halberds, not so very gently laid down on the ground, and occasionally on the spectator's toe. The Italian champions halted opposite their opponents in the same order as the French had done before, and having dismounted, repaired also to the eminence shaded by the holms. After a mutual greeting and the usual courtesies, Signor Prospero and Bayard, who were the sponsors, met in close interview, and

resolved that before all it was necessary to draw the lots of those who were to be the judges. I am sure the reader will wonder how it was that such a brave knight as Bayard, instead of being one of the combatants on an occasion of so much importance, appeared in the office of sponsor. Well then, I will tell him that I am not the less astonished myself, and I cannot guess at any other reason but that, perhaps, he was suffering from some wound not yet healed, or that he was prevented by the quartana, under an attack of which he was laboring at that time, and had weakened him, — at all events we are sure that he was not one of the champions.

Having then written the names of a few Spanish, French, and Italian *Caporali*, of both armies in equal numbers, they rolled up the briefs, and placed them in a helmet to be tossed. The lot fell on Fabrizio, Colonna, Obigni, and Diego Garcia de Paredes, who immediately took the seats set apart for them, opened on the table the books of the Evangelists, and administered the oath to the twenty-six champions. They pledged themselves not to use any fraud in the combat; swore that they had no charms on their bodies or on their arms, and that they would meet the chances of the fight trusting only their own skill and natural strength. The conditions were then read again by a herald; it was agreed that every man could ransom himself, his arms, and his horse by the payment of one hundred ducats. One of the Italians then emptied on the table the money they had carried, counted it, and gave it in trust to the judges. It was then thought that the French would do the same; but as they did not move, Prospero Colonna, as gently as he could, remarked, — "And your money, gentlemen?" La Motte came forward and answered, with a smile

"Signor Prospero, you will see that we have enough here." This impertinent boast made the blood rush to the face of the Roman baron; but he restrained himself, and only remarked: "Better to kill the bear before you sell the skin. But no matter; though it was mutually agreed that the ransom was to be deposited beforehand, we will not allow even this to be any hindrance to the battle. Gentlemen," he added, addressing his men, "did you hear? This knight looks upon the affair as settled. It is but fit that you should convince him of his mistake." We deem it useless to remark that these contemptuous manners made the blood boil very hot in the veins of the Italians, but they gave no other answer to either Signor Prospero or La Motte than a revengeful scowl and a look of defiance.

These preliminaries being arranged, the judges dismissed the champions, and half an hour was given them to get ready. A corneter on horseback, posted under the holms, would give three blasts, the signal of the onset.

They returned to their horses and mounted them. The sponsors placed them at four feet from each other, and both Colonna and Bayard again examined the bits, the saddle-girts, the straps and buckles of the armor; —and theirs were the best experienced eyes of the two armies.

The review being over, Signor Prospero halted his horse in the middle before the line of his party, and with a loud voice said: "Gentlemen, do not expect me to encourage you to meet the struggle in a manner worthy of you. I see Lombards, Neapolitans, Romans, Sicilians in your midst. Are you not all sons of *one* Italy? Will not the honor of the victory be awarded equally to you all? Are you not here before foreigners who brand you Italians as cowards? Only one word will I speak: see

yonder the infamous traitor, Graiano d'Asti? He comes to the battle field to fasten infamy on the brow of his brethren! Understand me! let him not leave the field alive!"

Fieramosca whispered to Brancaleone who stood by him: "Were I not under oath!" And Brancaleone answered: "Leave it to me! I have no vows. I know the vulnerable spot of his body!"

Brancaleone, from the day he had listened to the adventures of his friend, had a great desire to kill Graiano, and thereby to sweep from his way the only obstacle to his union with Ginevra. Then knowing that he was to be one of the Italian champions, he saw an opportunity for satisfying his wishes.

Our reader remembers what information he had obtained the day of the tournament, when Graiano was getting ready near the amphitheatre. But now the unexpected end of Ginevra had blasted his former hopes. However, he had not given up the idea, and the desire to carry it out was greatly enhanced by the words of Signor Prospero, to whom, as to the head of the Colonna party, he exhibited a blind obedience in every thing.

By this time the sponsors had withdrawn to their places: Bayard near the judges and Colonna under the holms. The latter was mounted on a black horse, housed in vermilion cloth embroidered with gold; he was armed at all points except at the head, which he held up before his men, full of majesty and boldness, quietly waiting the signal of the battle. He had at his side his page, a handsome youth of sixteen, in a dress of sky-blue, and carmine hose; he had, besides, several military attendants in different capacities, who, although motionless as statues, still betrayed souls fired with energetic and mar-

tial spirit. As the time advanced, the talking became fainter and less frequent; only a broken word was now and then uttered in a whisper.

The assemblage presented a solemn and grave appearance in its stillness, interrupted only now and then by the restless pawing and neighing of the horses, which, having been long kept at rest and highly fed, now could be scarcely held within the line, and champed the long golden bits, bespattered them with froth, and arched their necks and tails; they reared, snorted, and puffed with expanded and bloodshot nostrils, and their eyes flashed like fire.

It is not so very easy to form an adequate idea of the martial appearance of a man-at-arms of those days, as both he and his war-horse were accoutred in iron from head to foot. The knight with clasped visor, sheathed in his armor, with a shield on his breast and a lance on the thigh, bestrode a saddle with high bolsters in front and behind, like two guards, from which it was almost impossible to fall; thus encased, and setting his knees firm and close, he adhered to his steed so that the horse's movements were communicated to the rider, just as we imagine it should be in the double nature of a Centaur. The horse had the front and sides of his head protected by an iron headpiece, in which only two openings were left for the eyes; an iron spike projected from the middle of the front; the neck, shoulders, and breast covered likewise with small plates lapping over one another like scales, so interwoven as to allow a free movement to the limbs; lastly, an armor of like texture covered the crupper, haunches, and sides of the steed, leaving only an opening for the playing of the spurs. Thus the handsome features of the noble animals were so disfigured by that

cumbrous war furniture as to make them resemble, from the legs upward, a herd of rhinoceroses. To look at them as they stood, you would think they could not move, and much less run; but the least twitch of the bridle or a touch from the rider's heel, found them as ready and supple as if they had no encumbrance of armor, so ingeniously were the plates put together.

A steel mace and a pickaxe hanging on one side of the saddle, together with the lance, sword, and poniard which every knight carried on his person, completed their arms. The Italians were famous in the use of the mace and axe. In ornamenting themselves they followed their own pleasure or caprice; the helmets were generally decked with a cluster of plumes surmounted by a tall feather from the tail of a peacock. Some, instead of feathers, had jagged lists of silk, called in French *lambrequins*. Some wore cloaks and some shoulder-belts, and those who had armor of fine workmanship and rich, left it uncovered. Even the horses had on their heads plumes or other ornaments, and the reins were sometimes of a span's width, made with festoons and of gaudy colors; the cost and the materials of the reins alone were often of great value. On the shields, besides the knight's own coat-of-arms, the Italians bore mottoes befitting the occasion, as, for instance, that of Fieramosca — *Quid possit pateat saltem nunc Itala virtus.*

At last the herald advanced to the centre of the camp, and loudly proclaimed that none should dare by word, cry or action to favor or interfere with either party; then as he had regained the judges' stand, the trumpet gave the first sound — then the second . . . you might have heard the flapping of a fly's wing . . . then the third; and the knights simultaneously slackening the reins, bending over

the horses' necks, setting spurs to their flanks so violently as to lift them from the ground, started out against their opponents, bounding at first, then galloping at full speed; one band shouting "*Viva l'Italia*," and the other "*Vive la France*," — the yell reëchoing from the sea.

The space between the two parties was about four hundred feet. The dust began to rise slowly, it increased, it became more dense, and covered them ere they met; and thus enveloped as if in a cloud, they dashed against one another, their horses clashing with each other's fronts, the knights shivering their lances against the shields and cuirasses of their adversaries, with a shock not unlike that of a huge mass of rocks, which falling down a declivity meets no obstacle at first, but all of a sudden strikes upon a forest of trees, breaks its way through them, and tears, uproots, destroys every thing in its way. The spectators could not witness the first onset; in that confused and dusty mass of men and horses, they could scarcely distinguish the flash of the arms reflecting the sun, and the plumage torn by the fury of the sword, flying about in that tumult, and wafted away by the breath of the wind. The clash of arms reëchoed from the valley around. Diego Garcia, admiring those brave and manly deeds and mad with disappointment for not being in the mêlée himself, struck the thigh with his fist; and this was the only movement to be noticed among the astonished and silent spectators.

The warriors remained thus mixed up for a few seconds, when a narrower streak of glare, now and then reflected from their midst and flashing through the dust, showed pretty clearly that the warriors were engaged with swords; and that rattling of arms, that incessant hammering, resembled the noise of men working on a score of anvils.

Like an artificial fire veiled in part by smoke, that mass was glittering and quivering with a sparkling light, — so rapid were the movements according as it swayed one side or the other, opened or closed, or wheeled around in complicated evolutions.

The anxiety to find out to whom belonged the honor of victory had become so intense, that it seemed almost out of the question for the people to contain themselves any longer. Already a swelling whispering could be heard, but it was speedily suppressed by signs from the heralds, as well as by the sight of a horse rushing madly out of the mêlée, and so thickly covered with dust as to hide the color of the saddle entirely; — running over the field in half gallop, he dragged the torn bridle between his hoofs, and trampling on it, now with one foot and then with the other, he checked himself miserably, giving violent jerks to his head, right and left, in continual danger of falling. A stream of dark blood gushed from a large wound over his shoulder, and trailed an ensanguined track on the ground; after a few bounds he fell on his knees exhausted and rolled over on the dust. Every one recognized him as belonging to the French party.

The champions in the meantime had formed into pairs and fought with swords; thus arranged by twos, they struck and parried with great address, incessantly wheeled around to take their aim, and thereby more room was given to the struggle which at first had been so close; and the dust, dispelled by the wind, hid the combatants no more. Then every one saw that the unhorsed knight was Martellin de Lambris. The Frenchman, unluckily for him, had been singled out by Fanfulla, who with his fury so mad, and yet so skilful and so sure in its aim, hit the knight on the visor, holding the lance to the bars so

as to push him backward the whole length of it, and sent him to feel how soft the ground was; and as he hit the masterly blow shouted with a voice that drowned all the noise around: "There goes one!"—and then turning to La Motte, who by a thrust from Fieramosca had lost one stirrup, he continued in the same tone: "The money will not be enough . . . the money isn't enough. . . ." When the crowd had become thinned, he said to the vanquished Frenchman: "Thou art my prisoner . . .!" but the man rose on his feet, and his only reply was a thrust, which scratched the polished armor of the hero from Lodi. To lift his sword with both his hands and bestow a blow with it on the helmet of his foe, was but the work of a moment. Lambris was already shattered by the fall, and could hardly keep on his feet; and Fanfulla laid another blow on him, and another, and another, every time yelling: "the money is not enough . . . not enough . . . not enough . . .;" and the effort of the blow made him utter the words with that sort of *appoggiatura* which we hear issuing from the lungs of a wood-cutter swinging his axe and lodging it on the block he is chopping.

That champion could never regain his standing under those blows laid on him with so much power; he fell upon the ground almost senseless, but he would not ask quarter; so Fanfulla becoming enraged, gave the last cut, just as the Frenchman endeavored to rest on his knee, and laid him flat on the earth, saying,—

"Will that do?"

Bayard seeing that the soldier would have been killed to no purpose, dispatched a king-at-arms, who crossed his mace betwixt the two combatants, and loudly exclaimed: "*Martellin de Lambris prisonnier.*" Some of the pur-

suivants ran to help him up, and supported by them he was led to Signor Prospero's presence.

"God bless thy arms!" he shouted to the conqueror; then he directed some of his squires to take under guard the French baron, who however would not allow himself to be unhelmeted, but threw himself under an oak where he laid silent and motionless.

Fanfulla wheeled his horse around, spurred him at half gallop towards the battle, and was looking all around for something to do; and meanwhile, as if to amuse himself, he flourished his sword with every kind of bold and fantastic movement, in which sort of exercise he was held to be the most skilful and quickest hand in the army. From a general survey of the ground, he at once perceived that fortune was not on the enemy's side, and that the Italian men-at-arms were doing their duty well. Then raising his voice higher than ever, he called out La Motte's name, and struck again the old key: "the money isn't enough," which he sang to the tune of a very popular air sung then by blind people in the streets. And what with the careless and buffoonlike way he had of riding, the admirable flourishes, carried on as it were for self-amusement, and the tone of his voice, his mimicry had such an air of frolic grotesqueness that even the stern countenance of Signor Prospero relaxed into a smile.

While this first victory was being achieved, Ettore Fieramosca had with his lance made La Motte lose one stirrup, but had not been able as yet to unhorse him. La Motte was far superior to Fanfulla's prisoner in strength and address. Fieramosca, feeling jealous of the honor reaped by his brother, began to work with his sword so that the despiser of the Italians, with all his

skill, could scarcely hold against him. Fieramosca at that moment remembered the galling insult offered by La Motte at the supper, when he said that a Frenchman would not deign to hire an Italian to do a boy's work in a stable; and while he was showering his thrusts and cuts, unnailing and rending the enemy's armor, and at times wounding him, he repeated with a sneer: —

"At least we can handle the currycomb? help thyself, help thyself; here deeds are needed, not words."

The Frenchman, stung by the galling taunt, aimed a blow at the head of his antagonist with so much force, that Ettore, not being in time to cover himself with the shield, tried to parry it with the sword; but the weapon was not stout enough, it broke into shivers, and the Frenchman's blow fell on his neck, severing the collar of the breastplate, and inflicting a wound a little above the collar-bone. Fieramosca did not wait to give him another chance; but stooping a little, and passing his arms around the champion's waist, strove to drag him down; but the Frenchman let the sword go, and struggled to free himself. It was just what Ettore wished him to do; he let go his hold, and before La Motte had time to grasp the sword again, he spurred his horse, making him dart one side, and thus having a chance to snatch the mace that hung from the saddle, he fell with it upon his adversary again.

The good horse of Fieramosca had been trained to every kind of manœuvre; and now warned by a light twitch of the bridle and a touch of the spur, he rose on his hind legs, arching his back like a ram that wishes to butt, and bounded forward, only so far, however, as to place the opponent within his master's reach. Noticing how skilfully the steed managed his part, Fieramosca

thought:—I have done well indeed to take thee along!—and he used the mace with so much skill that he fairly gained over his antagonist the advantage he had lost.

The honor of the battle, if not the decisive victory even, might have been decided by the struggle of these two champions, who were looked upon as the best swords of the two armies. It would have covered La Motte with double shame, as he had expressed so much contempt for the Italians, and it would have crowned Fieramosca with double glory. His companions, well satisfied that he was a good match for the Frenchman, took particular care not to interfere; and the Frenchmen very carefully avoided to lend any help to their champion, that it should not be said that, after so much boasting, even one Italian should be too much for him. Even more, as by a common impulse and almost unconsciously, both parties suspended their fighting for a few minutes, and looked with amazement on the two champions. But they, spurred by such thoughts as we have just mentioned, were mad with a desire of victory, and fought so furiously, always on the alert against mishaps, ever ready to catch opportunities, that their encounter might indeed be called a model of knightly art.

Diego Garcia de Paredes, who had been a soldier his whole life, was amazed at the great skill displayed in that conflict, and unable to control himself any longer, had risen; then advancing to the edge of the bluff, which overlooked the lists, he watched them with an intense eagerness. Seen from afar, as he stood with that gigantic trunk set on two herculean legs, and his arms carelessly hanging down, he seemed a motionless statue; however, those who were near him well knew how disappointed he felt with his situation of a mere spectator, as the contrac-

tion of his muscles so perceptible under the close fitting skin garment, the clenched fist, and above all the flashing eye, betrayed the emotions of his soul.

Fanfulla, having left Signor Prospero, was galloping over the lists, and seemed not at all governed by those considerations and motives which animated the other champions. He spurred his horse, and came upon La Motte with uplifted sword. Ettore saw it, and cried — *avaunt!* but, as the command was unheeded, he dashed his horse athwart against that of the Lodigian, and with the butt of his mace bestowed a blow on his breast, which made him rein up abruptly and against his will.

"I am a match for him, and even more," added Ettore, in a passion of anger.

Ettore's courtesy towards La Motte won him the praise of all, except Fanfulla, who, breaking out with one of those Italian exclamations which cannot be expressed in writing, rejoined, half joking, half angry: —

"Thy tongue is in thy hands!"

He gave the horse a demivolt, and madly dashing amongst the adversaries, he broke their ranks, without, however, assailing any one in particular; thus, that momentary lull being broken up, the fighting was resumed more furiously than ever.

From the onset, Brancaleone had singled for his antagonist Graiano d'Asti, and the chances had as yet been even. The lances being broken, they fought with swords, and still neither party had any decisive advantage. Brancaleone was perhaps superior to Graiano in strength, and even in dexterity; but the Piedmontese champion was superior to all in knowing the advantage of rapid movement; and those who are acquainted with the art of fencing can value this quality.

The tide of battle flowed equally between the other champions, as either of the parties prevailed. Although the contest had lasted only about one hour and a half, it had, however, been so obstinate and fierce, that it was evident that both men and horses needed some rest; and accordingly the judges granted it of common accord. The trumpet sounded the signal, and the kings-at-arms crossed their lances betwixt the combatants and separated them.

A murmur arose among the crowd around the lists, not unlike that which we hear in a theatre when the curtain falls after a representation which has riveted the attention of a large audience. The champions retreated to the two extremities and alighted; some removed their helmets to cool their brows and wipe off the perspiration; some finding parts of their armor or of the accoutrements of their horses damaged, contrived to mend them. The steeds, shaking their manes, and grinding their jawbones, sought relief from the pain occasioned by the pulling of the bridles. Feeling the burden of the knights no more on their backs, they planted themselves on their forefeet, and with lowered heads they shook their limbs several times, making the armor ring.

But the venders of fruit and refreshments having fresh lungs, sang out louder and louder the praises of their goods; and the two sponsors, spurring their horses, advanced to greet their champions.

The honor of the day was thus far awarded to the Italians, as one of the opposite party had been made prisoner, and the rest of the French champions had been either wounded or badly used. Among those who had staked on the success of either party, such as stood pledged for the French began to feel considerably

damped and dispirited. The good Bayard was too experienced a champion of the lists not to feel that the fortune of the field was likely to be adverse to his party. With a stout countenance, however, and betraying not the least fear, he encouraged them, arranged them in their ranks, and reminded them of the general arts of a contest, how to strike and how to parry.

Prospero Colonna saw that his men were not so much in need of rest, as they had not been so much strained as the opposite party; and, therefore, after half an hour of respite, he requested that the champions should resume the battle. Accordingly, the marshals gave the signal. The horses were still panting from the previous struggle; but the warriors dashed the spurs into their flanks, and off the animals rushed against each other. It seemed as if victory might be decided in a few moments; the silence was deadly; the spectators were motionless; the excitement and fury of the combatants had reached the highest pitch. The gay mantles, the plumage, and all kinds of ornaments flew shattered in atoms, or were stained with blood or dust. The blue scarf of Fieramosca was seen hanging from his side, cut in twain by a blow from a sword; his helmet was shorn of its plumes, and flattened, but he was still fresh and strong, having only a slight wound on his neck, and he bore down upon La Motte with renewed animosity. Fanfulla was measuring his strength with Jacques de Guignes. Brancaleone was again engaged with Graiano, always aiming at the helmet, while the rest in the Italian ranks were fighting the other French champions, and belaboring them most obstinately.

A sudden shout from the spectators turned the attention even of the combatants to the struggle between Bran-

caleone and Graiano; it was now ended. The latter was bent over the horse, with both helmet and skull cleft, the blood streaming over his armor, and over the shoulders and legs of the horse, whose every step was marked in gore. At last he rolled over, and his fall sounded like the crash of a heap of old iron dashed on the ground. Brancaleone uplifted the bleeding battle-axe, whirled it over his head, and exclaimed in a manly and terrible voice:—

"*Viva l'Italia!* and so be it ever with accursed traitors." Thus emboldened, he dashed into the thick of the battle where the French soldiers were defending themselves desperately, bestowing blows with both hands right and left. But the struggle did not last long. Graiano's fall seemed to have turned the scale in favor of the Italians. Fieramosca, almost frantic with anger at the long and obstinate defence of La Motte, doubled the strength of his blows with so much rapidity, that he bewildered and stunned his antagonist. The Frenchman had lost his buckler, had only a broken sword to defend himself with, and his armor was unhinged, disconnected, and shattered. At last Ettore bestowed on his neck a blow with the battle-axe, so powerful that La Motte reeled over the bolsters of the saddle, and for a moment lost his eyesight.

Before he had time to recover, Fieramosca, who was at his right, swung the shield behind his shoulders, grasped with the left hand the thongs which fastened La Motte's breast plate, and pressing his knees, dashed the spurs into the flanks of the horse. The animal plunged forward, and thus the French knight was violently dragged from the saddle. As he lay on the ground, Ettore sprang from his horse, and stood over him with unsheathed dagger; then pointing it so near his forehead as almost to

touch him, commanded him in a voice of thunder: "yield thyself, or I'll finish thee." The baron, still half unconscious, answered not; that silence might have cost him his life, had not Bayard interfered and declared him prisoner.

After La Motte had been removed by his attendants, and led before Signor Prospero, Fieramosca turned to regain his horse; but it had disappeared; and looking around he saw Giraud de Forses, one of the enemy's band, who having had his horse killed under him, had taken that of the Italian, and was still fighting. Good Ettore felt that alone and on foot he could never recover his horse. But he had nursed and reared him with his own hands, and he was trained to obey and follow his master's call; endeavoring then to go as near to the horse as possible, he began to call his name, at the same time striking his foot on the ground as he was wont to do when he went to give him oats. The animal recognized the call, and turned to see whence it came; but the rider opposed its movements, and the horse began to rear, and then to plunge, and then to bound, so that the rider could not control him, and he was forced in spite of himself to go over to the camp of the Italians, who made a prisoner of him without any blow from their swords. The Frenchman dismounted, cursing his evil luck, and Fieramosca leaped on his favorite steed; but holding by the point the sword which had been taken from the French knight, returned it to him, saying: —

"God help thee, brother; take thine arms and go with thine, because we take our prisoners by dint of battle, not by the arts of tricksters."

The Frenchman was taken by surprise, as he had no hope whatever of such quarter. After one moment's pause, he replied: —

"If I do not avow myself conquered by your arms, I am vanquished by your courtesy;" and taking the sword at half blade, he went to lay it at the feet of Signor Prospero; and it was remarked by all who praised Fieramosca's courtesy, that the Frenchman also had acted like a noble knight and true. And for this reason he was not made to pay any ransom afterwards.

The French ranks had lost four of their best lances, while the thirteen Italians were all still mounted. It was easy to foresee with whom the honor of the day would remain. Nevertheless the Frenchmen, who had been unhorsed (they were five) closed together, and having at their flanks the four knights on horseback, two on each side, prepared themselves in that attitude to offer resistance to the Italians again. The latter rallied for the third time for an attack made by all simultaneously.

Not one among the spectators had the least thought or expectation that the French party could stand the shock; but still admiring the perseverance and address of those brave knights, their curiosity was sharpened into anxiety to see the result of their last movement; and some even wished that so much valor should not be perilled against such odds, to the imminent risk of their lives. But the French seemed not to have any fear of that;—trodden under foot, wounded, covered with dust and blood, they still offered a fearful and honorable sight as they boldly stood there prepared to be crushed by so many horses which came dashing upon them, and seemed determined to grind them to atoms. At last the Italians started, but not with the former speed; the horses were too tired, and some of them had their mouths covered with foam and blood from the too violent pulling of the bridles. The knights shouted louder than ever, *Viva*

l'Italia! and in spite of the spurs the horses galloped only heavily, and with some reluctance. Notwithstanding the rules made known at the beginning, the anxious curiosity of the spectators was raised to so high a pitch, that the boundary set at first for the spectators was broken, and the circle became narrower every moment. The pursuivants and squires who were charged with the duty of preserving order, forgot every thing else, and were led by curiosity to advance with the crowd in their concentric movement. Thus we have often seen in the public streets, when a bull has broken loose, the people at first keep at a safe distance, but if a dog takes hold of an ear, and another has indented its teeth into its hide, and the beast is almost brought to a stand, all leave their places, the shouts are louder, the tumult is greater, every thing is in confusion, since every one pushes forward to have a better view.

Fieramosca, who had the best horse, rode in the centre of the new ranks; and he was flanked on both sides by his companions who were ranged according to the greater power of their horses,—those who had better or swifter horses being nearer to his person. Thus they approached the enemy, their body having the shape of a cone, the apex of which was Fieramosca. Their closely serried onset was so directed that when they arrived within arm's length, they broke through the ranks of the French, who were unable to withstand the shock. But here a new struggle began, more close, more terrible than the former ones. The numbers, the valor, the skill of the Italians were met by efforts almost superhuman, by the struggles of despair, by the fury arising from the consciousness of a dishonor imminent and inevitable. The valiant and unfortunate Frenchmen, in a cloud of dust,

were falling bleeding under the hoofs of the horses, and made efforts to rise, grasping the stirrups of the knights, the bridles of the conquerors; and then they fell again, pushed, thrust down, trampled upon, rolling over and over, all weapons lost, their armor shattered and falling to pieces, and still ever endeavoring to rise again, to recover their stand, snatching from the ground broken swords, stumps of lances, and even stones to ward off their discomfit.

Ettore above the rest, with a loud voice entreated them to give up and to surrender themselves; but in that uproar he was scarcely heard; or if they heard him, they dumbly refused compliance, enduring with a stubborn patience those horrible blows; and with the madness of despair they continued their admirable defence. Of the four who were on their saddles at the beginning of this last encounter, one had been unhorsed, and was fighting on foot, two had their horses killed under them, the fourth had been surrounded and made prisoner. It is not in our power to convey an idea of all the strange complications of the fight, of the desperate acts which were done in those last moments, the recollection of which long remained in the minds of the spectators with mingled feelings of horror and wonder.

To give an instance, De Liaye was seen grasping with both hands the bit of Capoccio Romano, endeavoring to tear away the bridle; the horse threw him under his legs and trode on him, but the Frenchman would never let go his hold, and being thus dragged across the lists, was presented to Signor Prospero in that plight; and even then it took a great deal of labor, and many arms (so frantic was he) to make him loose his hands, and to place him among the prisoners. At last the Italians themselves

felt as if it would be too cruel to pursue that kind of warfare; all joined in shouting with Fieramosca, and forbearing to strike any more, cried to those who had been left in the French ranks: *prisoners . . . prisoners. . . .*

Even among the people arose a murmur, and it was swelling up, the remonstrance of the heralds being of no avail; it broke out into roars, and shouts, and cries that there should be an end to the battle, and that the French should have their lives spared. Every barrier being surmounted, the spectators had crowded on the combatants whose lists were reduced to a very narrow compass; some shouted, some waved their hats and their handkerchiefs, hoping to be able to stop the fight; and some also appealed to the judges and marshals. Signor Prospero ordering the people to make way, and approaching the champions, raised his voice and his truncheon to make the Frenchmen yield; even Bayard, albeit he keenly felt the defeat of his party, convinced that any further resistance would have been useless, and thinking that it would have been an unpardonable sin to waste thus the blood and the lives of those brave men, came forward, and cried to his men to yield, and to give themselves up as prisoners. But neither his voice, nor the entreaties of all the bystanders had any power over the vanquished, who scarcely looked like human beings, but had more the appearance of demons or furies let loose upon earth. At last even the judges descended from their stand; they mixed with the combatants, ordered the trumpets to sound, and the Italians to be proclaimed conquerors. The latter then endeavored to withdraw, but to no avail; their adversaries, lashed into fury by their rage, grief, and wounds, went on, like so many tigers crushed within the coils of serpents, to harass their enemies as much as possible.

Diego Garcia at last, hopeless of seeing an end put to that butchery by the usual laws of the tournament, resorted to an expedient of his own, and dashing at Sacet de Jacet, just as he was wrestling with Brancaleone, and pretending to snatch the battle-axe from his hand, while the latter seemed to be debating with himself whether he should bestow upon his head a blow which would have finished him, — he seized him by the shoulders, and with wonderful strength dragged him out of the lists in spite of himself. Diego's example was followed by many of the spectators; in less time than we can say it, they pounced upon the French champions, and although some were severely handled, still pushing and pulling, tearing and dragging, after a great deal of exertion they succeeded in taking those five men away from the field; and notwithstanding they offered a great deal of resistance, and were foaming with rage, they were at last disposed of with the rest under the oak trees.

Fieramosca's first care, as soon as the last embers of the fight were extinguished, was to leap from his horse and run to Graiano d'Asti, who lay motionless on the place where he had fallen.

When Brancaleone had given the fatal blow, a sudden feeling of joy sprang up in the generous heart of Fieramosca. But that feeling was immediately stifled by a noble and virtuous thought. He approached the fallen knight, and ordering the people to stand apart, he knelt by his side. The blood was still flowing from the gaping wound, but slow and curdled; he lifted the head very carefully, as if anxious to save the life of a most dear friend, and succeeded in removing the casque.

But the battle-axe had cleft the skull and inflicted a wound three inches deep; the knight was dead. Ettore

gave a sigh from his inmost heart; then laying the head of the slain warrior carefully down again, and rising on his feet, he turned to his brethren in arms, and more particularly addressing Brancaleone, said: —

"This weapon of thine," and he pointed to the battle-axe held in his friend's grasp, still dripping with blood, "has this day accomplished a great justice. But can we enjoy this victory? is not this earth imbrued with Italian blood? Ah! might he not, strong and valiant as he was on the battle field, have shed it to his and our glory against the common enemy? Then Graiano's tomb would have been honored and glorious! his memory a monument of pride! But now there he lies in infamy, and the malediction on the traitor against his country weighs heavy upon him." ... After these words they all returned in silence to their horses, a deep gloom veiling their countenances. Graiano's corpse was carried in the evening to Barletta; but when an attempt was made to bury it in consecrated ground, the people, rising in a mass, would not allow it. The corpse bearers carried it to a pass by a torrent at the distance of two miles from the town, dug a trench and buried him. That spot was afterwards called *The Traitor's Pass.*

Signor Prospero, before leaving the camp, turned to Bayard and requested him whether he was ready to pay the ransom. Thus the bravado of La Motte was visited upon Bayard, who made no reply; and the judges ordered that the prisoners should follow their conquerors to Barletta. On foot, silent, covered with shame and confusion, surrounded by an immense throng of people, they were followed by the Italians on their horses, amidst the flourishes of the trumpets, and the shouts of the spectators, whose voices made the welkin ring with the cry: *Viva l'Italia! Viva Colonna!*

When the thirteen warriors had entered the citadel, and were in the presence of Gonzalo, who received them amidst the *elite* of his barons, they presented to him the twelve prisoners. The great Captain bestowed a well-merited eulogy on the victors, and then addressed the French knights thus: —

"Be it far from me to offer insult to valorous men in misfortune. The fortune of war lasts but one day, and the conqueror of today may be vanquished on the morrow. It is not for me to teach you that you must henceforward have respect for Italian valor. My words would prove superfluous after the deeds of today. But I will warn you from this day forward to revere and honor valor and courage wherever it may be found; ever remembering that God has not given it in trust to any one nation exclusively, but has distributed it largely among all men, and that true courage is always enhanced by modesty, and forever blighted and dishonored by bravado."

After these words he dismissed them; they left the hall, and thus ended that glorious and memorable day.

Let us be sincere. Those who tell or write a story always entertain a little hope that it will prove interesting, and that there may always be some one who will listen to it, or read it to the end. We have also nurtured this hope in a remote corner of our heart; but it was like the flame of a candle at the mercy of the wind, flickering all the time, — now radiant with brilliancy, (does our reader smile?) and then fluttering away into so small dimensions, as to seem almost dying out;

but our own self-love has endeavored to manage so well that it has not yet become extinguished.

If this selfish and wary flatterer has not deceived us, — if there has actually been some reader endowed with so much patience as to accompany us all the way to this point, we may flatter ourselves that he wishes to know something more about Ettore Fieramosca; and certainly we shall gratify his curiosity by imparting all the information we have been able to obtain.

The conquerors and their prisoners left Gonzalo and repaired to the quarters of the Colonnas, who received them and entertained them most generously, and gave the Frenchmen comfortable lodging for the night. On the morrow, the ransom having been sent from the French camp, they were remanded free, and were escorted out of the gates of Barletta by many of Gonzalo's troops, who paid to them those marks of honor which were undoubtedly due to their gallant defence.

But Fieramosca, after leaving Gonzalo's presence, gave no further thought to the adversaries. At last he could devote all his thoughts to himself and to Ginevra. Therefore he quietly stole away from his companions who were surrounded and feasted by a host of friends, and who in the frenzy of their victory could not pay much attention to his movements. He saw Vittoria Colonna in one of the piazzas. She had been present at the reception given by Gonzalo to the thirteen warriors, and was then returning to her own apartments. He hurried his steps, and calling her name, made her pause and turn back. Vittoria had been informed of the history of Fieramosca, and well she guessed what he wished to know from her.

"O my God! — what shall I say?" But she had no time to summon her thoughts, before Ettore was at

her side. His armor was stained all over with dust, and it was indented here and there by the blows from the enemy's weapons. Only one plume, and that drooping, was on the helmet; of the rest only the stumps remained. The lifted visor uncovered his handsome features, haggard from the labor of the day, stained by perspiration, and beaming, it is true, with honest pride for the obtained victory; but at the same time betraying his great anxiety to meet her, whom, at last, after Graiano's death, he might call his own.

Circumstances always exert great influence over the hopes and fears of a man's heart. The despondency, and I might almost say the despair, which Fieramosca had suffered during the night and the morning before the fight, thinking about the situation of Ginevra, had now, after the shock and protracted labor of the battle, and from the ineffable joy of having merited the honors of the day, given place to a most confident hope that he would find her safe and sound.

"My lady!" he said, in a tone of trepidation, caused by the heavy beating of the heart, "may God reward you, and may He bless you. I know all . . . how you have received her, and have been so good to the poor thing. . . . Oh! she needed it . . . ! Lead me to her, — let us go to her for God's sake . . ."

Every word uttered by Ettore went through the heart of Vittoria like a dagger, and she had not the courage to impart the terrible news. On the contrary she put on a smile, and said: —

"Ginevra is again at Sant' Orsola."

It was too true. She had been carried to the Monastery about one hour before the warriors had returned from the lists, and Fra Mariano had accompanied the corpse, for the purpose of burying her during the night.

"What! in Sant' Orsola? How, so soon? Then she has not been very sick? She is well, then?"

"Yes! she is well!"

In the transport of his joy, Fieramosca opened his arms to embrace Vittoria; but he recollected himself, and instead, he put one knee on the floor, took her hand, and stamped on it kisses of gratitude, which spoke more than a thousand words.

Then he rose, almost beside himself, and started to go to Sant' Orsola, without speaking another word; but he halted a moment, looking at his breast, and turned back.

"See, Signora," he said with a smile, and somewhat hesitating,—"see this blue scarf, it is a gift from her. . . Today a cut from the sword, lodging on the breast-plate, has cut it in twain."

Saying this he undid the knot which he had made with the two ends to keep it together.

"I know I venture too much, but, for great mercy, would you be pleased to mend it, so that Ginevra will not see that it is cut? The poor thing would take it as a bad omen. . . . She might say: Why not protect it with the buckler? . . ."

Most willingly did Vittoria go to her room to procure the needed implements, thus having an opportunity to recover herself and to control the deep emotions of her heart, commiserating the baseless confidence of Fieramosca. She returned more assured, and began to mend the scarf, keeping her head bent downward, that he might not read the expression of her countenance.

While she was engaged at her work, Ettore remarked with a smile: "You can scarcely distinguish its color . . . It has gone through many hardships. . . . It has

been my companion during many evil hours. It shall henceforward be the companion of my happiness. If you knew how many years I have worn it! . . . I have saved it through so many battles . . . and today! . . . this very day, when all my trials will be turned into joy . . . they have spoiled it! If I believed in signs, what should I think?"

Vittoria went on sewing without uttering a syllable. In a terrible struggle between the feeling that he *ought* to know the true state of affairs, and the unsurmountable dread of being obliged to pour so much sorrow into his heart, she thought of compromising matters by sending for Brancaleone, and lay it upon him to help his friend in that terrible trial.

"A thousand thanks to you," said Ettore when the mending was finished; and hurrying down the steps, he was in the castle yard with the speed of the lightning. There was no other person there but Masuccio holding Ettore's horse, still panting and foaming; the head of the poor animal was hanging down, its eye was spiritless, and its flanks were heaving laboriously.

"To the stable, to the stable," cried Ettore, as he dashed by his groom; "don't you know any better? . . . to keep a horse so hot and sweating in the open air! . . . " and off he went towards the shore, as the passage to Sant' Orsola was much shorter by water.

But no boat could he obtain at the wharf. The vessels carrying the Spanish troops were anchored in the harbor, and Gonzalo was very anxious that they should all be landed before night. Every skiff, boat, and craft of any kind in the port had been engaged for that purpose.

Ettore stamped the ground with his foot, and exclaimed, "I'll go on horseback; it is a longer route, but be it so."

He went to the stable; Masuccio was taking the bridle off Airone's neck.

"Let it be," he said, and taking the bridle from Masuccio's hands, threw it over the animal's neck, leaped on the saddle, and in a few moments he was out of the city, following the road which led to the Monastery along the sea-shore.

"Poor Airone!" he said, patting the horse's neck with his hand, while with the spur he hurried the sluggish trot of the good steed, for whom it was hard to be driven from the stable after so much fatigue; "thou art right, but have patience a little longer, and I will repay thee for all."

Night was approaching; the sun had been down for half an hour. Fieramosca faced the east; behind him the sky was serene, free from any vapor, but immense clouds arose before him, towering up in huge black volumes towards the sky, and flattened at the bottom on a line parallel with the horizon. Broad sheets of rain were pouring down perpendicularly on the waters, in more or less dense masses; and the summits of that heap of clouds drifting towards the sky, still reflected the rays of the expiring sun, and were colored with a whitish light. Almost incessantly did the quivering glare of the lightning flash through that darkness, and the thunder rumbled heavily from afar. The sea was rising and threatened a squall; it was black in the high waters, while the crests of the billows sparkled with white and feathery spray. The waves, gradually rolling towards the shore, ended in very sharp blades, green and transparent, advancing like a crystal wall, the top of which curling over fell with a splash, and covered with foam the dry gravel of the coast.

However, the gloomy appearance of the weather could

not at that time mar in the least the buoyant happiness of the Italian knight. With an impatient, restless eye he spanned the distance separating him from Sant' Orsola, and the coast being level and bare he saw the building most plainly. He imagined the pleasure of the first encounter with Ginevra; he imagined how she would come to meet him with that look so full of honesty, and that approach so cheering and graceful. He would be the first to announce to her the news of the victory! — only he felt embarrassed in finding the most proper manner to inform her that now she was perfectly free to dispose of her own hand.

When within two musket shots from the tower, the easterly wind had drifted the storm nearer to Ettore, who had to ride against it; large drops of rain fell obliquely on the youth's armor, and rebounded in a spray over the armor; they became quicker and quicker, and smaller and smaller. A thunderbolt seemed to have burst open one of the cataracts of heaven, and the rain began to descend with great violence, drenching Fieramosca from head to foot, although he was only a few strides from the tower. The gates had not yet been closed; he rode through swiftly, and in a few moments he was on the island and at the guests' lodge. He tied the horse to the iron grate of the window of an outbuilding, and dashed up to Ginevra's room.

It is useless to say that it was empty. He came down again, and at first he thought of entering the church. He knew that one of its high tribunes was a favorite spot with her, where she resorted to perform her devotions; he entered it, but it was empty; the church was empty also and almost perfectly dark. That part of the choir or absis that could be seen was also empty; still

the sound of a subdued psalmody, coming as it were from underground, reached his ear. He went forward, and saw flickering on the ceiling of the dome, a faint light issuing from the grated opening, before the high altar, and communicating with the chapel underneath; as he drew near, he heard a mournful singing of psalms in the little chapel below. He turned around the altar, and went down. The clatter of his arms, of his spurs, and of the scabbard rebounding on the steps, attracted the attention of those who stood in a circle around the centre of the chapel; they opened the way for the warrior. Ettore found himself by the bier which he had seen that morning in the vestry of San Dominico; before him, by the altar, stood the hallowed person of Fra Mariano, with the black stole on his breast, his right hand raised, and extended in the act of sprinkling the blessed water; in the midst, an open tomb; on one side two men holding upright the stone; on the other side Zorais, desperately crying on her knees, bent over Ginevra's corpse, was arranging the shroud around the head, and placing a wreath of white roses over that pale brow.

Ettore reached the brink of the sepulchre, saw every thing, but remained motionless, spoke not a word, made no sign, did not move even an eyelid. His face began to sink; it became as pale as death; a convulsive quiver seized his lips, and a cold perspiration in large drops trickled down from his brow.

Zorais sobbed louder, and Fra Mariano, with a troubled, unsteady voice, showing how sadly his heart was lacerated at the sight of that most unhappy youth, made an effort to say:—

"She fled to heaven yesterday. God has now made her a great deal happier than if she had remained with us. . . ."

But even the good priest was choking with tears, and said no more.

The stone was slowly lowered on the crowbars, met with the bezels of the tomb, it fell, and there it lay.

Ettore was still motionless. Fra Mariano approached him, took him by the hand, which was given without resistance, embraced him, turned him around to lead him away from that place, and Ettore obeyed. They ascended the steps, and then went out of the church; the lightning still flashed, the thunder still rumbled, the rain was falling in torrents. When they had reached the guests' quarters, Fieramosca disentangled himself from the arms of the good monk; and before the latter could even utter a word, the unfortunate knight was already on his saddle, bending over the horse, dashing the spurs into his flanks, and the tramp of a full gallop was heard under the sombre entry of the tower.

Neither Fieramosca's friends, nor any person of those times, ever saw him after that day, alive or dead.

Various were the surmises as to his end, but all vague and groundless. Only one had some semblance of truth, and it originated thus: —

Some poor mountaineers of Mount Gargano, who were at work making coal, related to some peasants — and thus the story went from mouth to mouth, until it reached even Barletta, long after the Spanish camp had been raised — how, on a certain very stormy night, they had seen the strange apparition of a knight, armed from head to foot, riding his horse on the top of inaccessible rocks, which formed the brink of a cliff perpendicularly rising from the sea. At first only a few spoke of it, then many were told of the secret, until at last all believed that it was a supernatural vision which had been seen.

But when Fra Mariano heard of it, and compared dates, he believed that Ettore, being out of his mind, had pushed his horse into very dangerous places, and that at last both horse and rider fell into some unknown abyss, or perhaps into the sea.

In 1616, a large tract of rocks under the Gargano became dry, and a fisherman discovered between two huge rocks a heap of irons half corroded by the action of salt water and rust, and rumaging among them, he found some human bones and the carcass of a horse.

The reader can draw his own conclusions. Our story is ended.

It would be vain and ridiculous to believe that this story will be well received on our own merits; but we think that the Italians will accept with kind indulgence the good will of one who has taken some pains in recording an exploit which honors them so much. To display the valor of the conquerors in bolder relief, we did not feel at liberty to feign circumstances which might aggravate the case of the vanquished. The histories of Giovio, Guicciardini and others, would lay our dishonesty open. It was not our aim to offer a reproach to French valor, which we are among the foremost to acknowledge and honor. We only aimed at making Italian valor known; and in this, history amply bears us out. On this subject let us be allowed to protest against the base contentions, which frequently lead men of different nations to cast into each other's faces, — often summoning help from falsehood, — their shame and their faults; on the contrary, we hold it as a duty of those who love

human nature, to trample under foot, and smother those sparks of hatred, unfortunately too lasting and suicidal, thereby following the law of love and justice proclaimed in the gospel.

But what shall we say of those enmities more foolish, —aye, more sacrilegious, which have sometimes lasted so long between parties of the same nation? Unfortunately Italy cannot blot out from her national escutcheon the stain of this crime and shame; although the whole world will allow to her the primacy of merit and glory in other respects. Although those animosities have always been, and are now more than ever, deplored and accursed, still the blame is very far from filling the measure of the guilt.

It is then our opinion that whoever undertakes to record some of those painful events with which our histories are unhappily teeming, may indeed fulfil a great duty, imperfectly, it is true, but not unprofitably or altogether uselessly. And moreover it seems to us that this verdict of blame must appear more sincere and more weighty when it bears on one's natal place; otherwise the judgment might appear partial, and not altogether free from that international jealousy which it is the purpose of the writer to condemn. Therefore, in our opinion, none could be more in duty bound to let a solemn record of condemnation be placed against the memory of Graiano d'Asti, than he who shares with him a common birthplace in Piedmont.

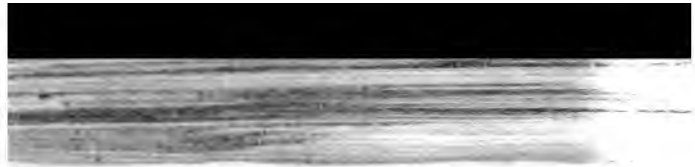
It is true, however, that Napione has long ago expressed the opinion of the Piedmontese as regards that traitor. "That countrymen of ours from Asti, who in the famous Passage-at-Arms of Quadrato, having taken up arms with the French against the Italians, not only shared

with them the ignominy of a defeat, but, having fallen in the struggle, it was the opinion of all at the time, that he had been deservedly punished for his folly, because he had dared to take up arms against his country in favor of a strange nation." *

But be it said for our comfort, that in this day, let Italy be searched from end to end, not a single one could be found, who would follow the example of that wretch.

* NAPIONE, *on the Use and Beauties of the Italian Language.* Book 1, ch. 15.

THE END.



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